THE CHARLATANS

BERT LESTON TAYLOR

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THE CHARLATANS

"Dreaming of the World Beyond her Valley" *See page 5*

THE CHARLATANS

By

BERT LESTON TAYLOR

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
GEORGE BREHM

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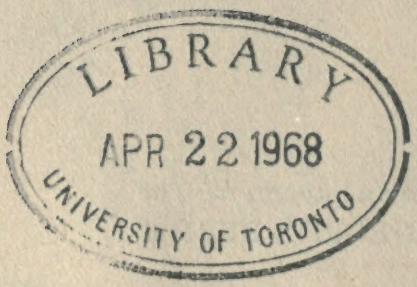

TO MY WIFE

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DORNRÖSCHEN

In the great hall of Castle Innocence,
  Hedged round with thorns of maiden doubts and fears,—
Within, without, a silence grave, intense,
  Her soul lies sleeping through the rose-leaf years.

Hedged round with thorns of maiden doubts and fears;
  And all save one the thither path shall miss.
Her soul lies sleeping through the rose-leaf years,
  Waiting the Prince and his awakening kiss.

And all save one the thither path shall miss;
  For one alone may thread the thorn defense,
Waiting the Prince and his awakening kiss,
  A hush broods over Castle Innocence.

For one alone may thread the thorn defense,
  Care free, heart free, and singing on his way.
A hush broods over Castle Innocence
  One comes to wake; but when—ah, who can say!

Care free, heart free, and singing on his way,
  One comes all thorns of Fear and Doubt to dare.
One comes to wake! But when? Ah, who can say
  The hour his light feet press the castle stair!

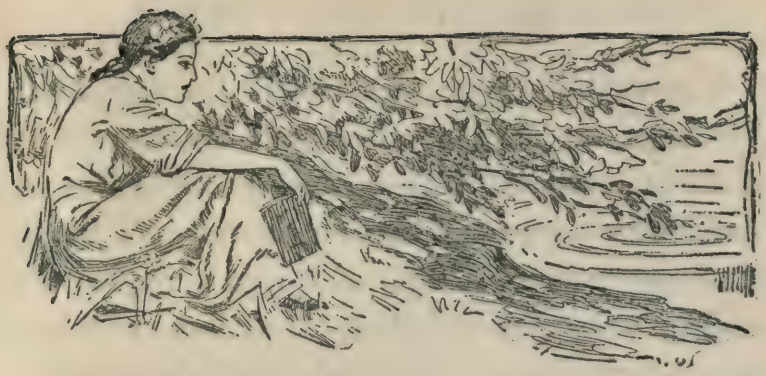
One comes all thorns of Fear and Doubt to dare!
  Thorns with his coming into roses bloom.
The hour his light feet press the castle stair
  The warders of the castle hall give room.

Thorns with his coming into roses bloom:
For him the flowers of Trust and Faith unfold.
The warders of the castle hall give room
Before the young Prince of the Heart of Gold.

For him the flowers of Trust and Faith unfold:
Till then the thorns of maiden doubts and fears.
Before the young Prince of the Heart of Gold
Her rose soul slumbers through the tranquil years.

Till then the thorns of maiden doubts and fears.
Within, without, a silence grave, intense.
Her rose soul slumbers through the tranquil years
In the great hall of Castle Innocence.

THE CHARLATANS



THE CHARLATANS

CHAPTER I

BY THE RIVER'S BRIM

Princess Hope sat by the river's brim, her hands clasped round her knees, a look in her eyes we call the far-away.

Princess Hope, it may as well be owned at once, was not a real Princess. Her gown was not of silk and jewel-broidered; her hair was not spun gold, but a wayward coil of chestnut, innocent of ornament; her face, profiled against the green terrace of a cascade, was not the Princess face one sees in books of faëry, or encounters among portraits of existing royalty.

You would, perhaps, first remark the nose, which was large, the line of it adventurous—confidently so. Quite otherwise the cleft and rounded chin; here indecision lurked, questioning the other feature's daring. Full lips between, hinting of a nature responsively ardent, were tempered by spiritual brow and long throat-line, wistfully advanced. A fair face, you would say. A beautiful face, some would maintain—opinions vary so; at all events, an interesting, an unusual face.

Her name was Hope Winston; her station in life, a farmer's daughter. Then, why the "Princess"? you would inquire, did you not suspect an explanation close at hand. Why, then, the title was bestowed on her by little Alice Winston, a romantic child whose glowing fancy, nourished by fairy tales unnumbered, imaged sister Hope adventuring forth into the great wide world beyond their little valley, to return, very shortly afterward, with a handsome king's son by her side, in a purple chariot drawn by snow-white steeds, or birds, or butterflies. I dare say that if you pinned the child down to it, she would admit "p'tending." We elders "pretend" as well, and with at best pedestrian fancy.

Always it was the elder sister that rode in the

dream chariot. Hope, in the eyes of little Alice, was a superior being (there is one such in every family, as you have reason to know)—just the sort with which fairies are fond of experimenting. For fairies, as you need not be informed, when they would shield a Princess against self-love and pride of station, or some dire evil forecast by court astrologer, change the little one in the cradle, that she may grow to years of discretion in the family of some honest peasant, who believes her to be his very own daughter.

In your excursions among the peasantry you must have remarked more than one of these changeling Princesses, who are to be recognized by their modesty, amiability and gentle bearing. The writer well remembers the summer morning *he* encountered one, and inquired of her the way to a certain trout stream. (He knew the country quite as well as she, but feigned ignorance that he might speak with her.) How sweetly she directed him!—he heard her voice all day in the brook water. How lightly her little feet touched earth when she tripped away; how high she held her head! And how the young man stared after, until the jealous road crooked suddenly and hid her from his sight. . . .

The conceit of the Prince and chariot gave Alice

a deal of innocent pleasure, and fortunately, when one considers the enormous mischief wrought by fairy tales, did nobody a pennyworth of harm. Hope was eighteen, and quite sensible for her years. She was not without her own romantic notions—as which of us is not?—but the Prince she might some day meet was not associated in her mind with purple chariots, or splendor of any surface sort; he existed as a beautiful abstraction—as Prince of the Heart of Gold. Yet it was not of the Prince she dreamed as she sat by the river's brim.

It was a mad river—indeed, that was the name given to it by the people who dwelt in its valley—a mad little river of many moods and many, many voices. It came from somewhere beyond the green notch in the sky-line to the north, and ran, with many a hop, skip and jump, past the little village of Swiftwater. Here it neighbored the highway, which led northward to Vanceburg, and southward, less specifically, to the great wide world.

Of this world Hope had only hearsay knowledge. Her domain, in which her gentle sway was undisputed, was bounded by the notch in the northern sky-line, the bridge by the mill-pond, and the walls of the narrow valley; four miles of river—and she knew every

foot of the way. She knew where first would peep forth, each spring, the leaves of trillium and saxifrage; under which ledge would first nod columbine and virgin's-bower; behind which mossy rock the first star-of-Bethlehem would rise; and where was tiny bishop's-cap, and showy lady's-slipper, and Indian-pipe that seeks the deepest shadow.

Now it was no longer spring, nor even summer. October's haze enwrapped the valley. Dying grasses and denuded boughs framed the nook in which our Princess loitered—a green bowl into which tumbled a cascade, and out of which ran the river, waist deep, through a maze of alders. One might not come that way without a wetting.

Here sat Hope, the look in her eyes we call the far-away, dreaming of the world beyond her valley; of men and women who mattered in the scheme of things, who lived to some purpose and did things, because the opportunity to live and do was theirs.

Ah, that the opportunity might also be hers! She, too, wanted to live, and do, and matter in the scheme of things. Not an unusual aspiration in these days of unshackled womanhood. Yet, whereas so many maids aspire in a vague and general way, the ambition of Princess Hope was definite and statable.

Beside her on the bank lay a slender book—a message, a call. "*Come unto us,*" the burden of it ran,—"*Come unto us and learn to express your soul.*"

"Nay, stay with me," whispered the Spirit of the Woodland. "Thy soul shall blossom here as elsewhere."

"Stay with me," babbled the little river of many moods and many, many voices. "Stay with me," piped a white-throat from a hazel covert.

But Princess Hope, for the first time deaf to the voices of the wood and stream, looked steadily into the south, over hill and dale, roof and spire—to the City of the Soul.

Music was her passion—a passion that but recently had flowered. She had escaped being a child prodigy; Swiftwater was not an environment to develop a musical *Wunderkind.* She was eight years old before she sat willingly at the ancient square pianoforte in the Winston "parlor," and discovered a real interest in "Lucy Long." Even then, if the day were fine, she would suddenly exhibit stupidity so exasperating that her mother was glad to bring the lesson to an abrupt conclusion and send the child into the air and sunshine. The little mother, when a girl, had

shown a talent for music, but, wanting cultivation, it had come to nothing.

On rainy days and in winter time, little Hope practised with industry and enthusiasm; and so swift was her progress that in a year she was playing "Autumn Leaves," "Forest Reveries," "Whisperings" of this, "Rustlings" of that, "Silvery Waves," "Monastery Bells," "Clayton's Grand March," and other brave tunes of an elder day. These occupied her fingers until her fourteenth birthday.

It was then decided that she should receive more serious instruction; and once a week she drove to Vanceburg, eight miles distant, to recite to a superannuated German professor in side-whiskers, who dozed through the lesson and woke with a start to say, "Very goot." She learned nothing of importance from him, nor from his successor, an Italian voice culturist, who knew even less about the piano than the voice. These were charlatans, members of a family who are in number as the sands of the sea.

Had Hope been a real Princess, the instruction she received at this period would have sufficed; for in the education of royalty, music is of no more importance than dancing, or painting, or any other accomplishment polite. But music, intuition told our Princess,

was to mean more to her than anything else in the world; and thus it was a happy and an ever-to-be-remembered day when Enlightenment knocked at the porch of the Winston farm-house and begged a glass of well-water.

Enlightenment was a Mrs. Maybury, who had accompanied her husband on a fishing trip to the country round about Vanceburg. Mrs. Maybury was a small woman, with a delicate oval face, fine brown eyes, and very long eyelashes; a quiet-mannered, low-voiced lady. No one just like her had passed before through the valley of the Mad River.

While Maybury fished, his wife botanized and studied birds; and as Mad River was one of the best trout streams in the county, Hope and Mrs. Maybury saw each other frequently. The girl and her music interested the woman,—the slim, shy country maid with the dreaming eyes and awkwardly-drooping shoulders; the tinkling, rubbishy music, unworthy of the manifest talent squandered on it. It transpired, one day, that Mrs. Maybury was a musician. Hope, abashed and crimson-cheeked, exclaimed: "Oh, I should not have played for you if I had known!"

"You have no reason to feel ashamed of the performance," Mrs. Maybury said; "you play very well.

But, my dear girl, if music, as you say, means more to you than anything else in the world, it is high time you learned something about it. This,"—she indicated contemptuously the stack of "Rustlings" and "Reveries" on the piano,—"this isn't music, you know."

Hope had suspected something of the sort, and eagerly she begged to be enlightened. She thirsted for knowledge, and her new friend's phrases sank into her mind like rain in a desert, which waits but this to put forth fruits and flowers.

"You must study Bach, and Beethoven, and Brahms, and Schumann, and all the other masters," Mrs. Maybury told her. "You can not do much in this out-of-the-way place; soon or late you must go to the city, and the sooner the better; but meantime you can start yourself in the right direction. When I go home I will send you some music, which will keep you busy for a while. . . . And now I must say good-by. We leave to-morrow."

"Won't you play for *me* before you go?" Hope requested. "I have never heard any *real* playing."

"You poor child!" said Mrs. Maybury. "Yes; of course I will play for you. What shall it be?"

"Bach, or Beethoven, or . . ."

"B-r-a-h-m-s." Mrs. Maybury spelled out the strange word, smiling. "I am especially interested in Brahms. I will play his Second Rhapsody."

Hope's first sensation was one of bewilderment. Her ear was unprepared for the strange harmonies that poured tumultuously upon it. This sensation gave way to a physical tremulousness, and tears started in her eyes. Unaware of the effect she was producing, the pianist began the climax of the Rhapsody, and the fierce rush of it swept Hope into hysteria. She felt she must cry out, beseech the lady to stop playing, or fly the room. She rose, but dizziness took her, and she sank back again. She was sobbing when the music ceased.

Surprised and pleased, Mrs. Maybury put an arm about the neophyte's shoulders. "Dear girl," she said, "I have never had so sympathetic a listener."

She played for an hour or more, until she came to the end of her repertory, which, she remarked, was brief in summer. . . .

The promised books came promptly: a volume of Czerny studies, Bach's Inventions, and the first volume of Beethoven's Sonatas.

"When you can play Czerny up to tempo," wrote Enlightenment, "you can play anything. But Bach!

—study Bach. As my friend Karl Geist says, 'Bach, then Bach; and when you have finished with Bach, study Bach. For there is nothing new in music; you can go back and find it all in Bach.'

"I hope, dear girl, I have done you some good. I feel that I have. When you venture the city, as some day you will, be sure to come to me. . . ."

Fourteen months had passed, and Hope was still in Swiftwater. But the months had been profitably employed. Six hours a day she labored at the ancient instrument in the Winston parlor, and was as fresh at the end of her practice, almost, as at the beginning; for she had health and strength, and firm though finely-tempered nerves. The mother continued to encourage her, remembering her own scant opportunities, and enthusiastic little Alice helped by taking all of the dish-washing and bed-making on herself.

There is no royal road to learning, but genius has a trick of cutting across lots. Thus Hope knew her Bach and Beethoven, and could play the Czerny within hailing distance of tempo, when Professor Demeritt, fresh from the city, in all the panoply of diploma and teacher's certificate, established himself in Vanceburg as teacher of pianoforte.

Farmer Winston's property was conspicuous more

by the absence of mortgage on his estates than by the presence of cash in hand; but there had always been a little money for music lessons, and it was voted that the village Liszt should have a trial.

But in the presence of Genius, Professor Demeritt lost his nerve. He could teach her nothing—he knew that when he heard her play; and *she*, as he felt, would come to know it too, and would despise him. The girl played marvelously well. Where had she picked up all that technic? He took a turn about the room; then he said, with a hum here and a haw there:

"Of course, Miss, I should be pleased to have you for a pupil; but I am inclined to believe—I may say I am certain—that you should have a wider field. Here is a book, the annual catalogue of the Colossus Conservatory of Music. I spent three months there."

The professor pointed to the teacher's certificate framed above the piano.

"I took the business course, but you, of course, will want the classical; that will require at least a year. You do not wish to become a teacher, I suppose?"

He glanced, with a shade of apprehension, at the certificate on the wall.

"No; I do not wish to become a teacher," Hope replied.

"Read this book, Miss, and consult with your parents. Tell them I can recommend the conservatory. It is the largest and finest in the world."

And Hope had taken the book to her favorite pool on the Mad River. And there she had looked into the south and dreamed. And the little river had babbled of green fields all in vain.

The annual catalogue of the Colossus Conservatory of Music was one of the prettiest booklets imaginable. It was printed on thick glossy paper, and bound in red and gold; and scattered through the text were portraits of men and women who, one was informed, taught the inarticulate soul to express itself through the medium of music.

In respect of personal appearance these soul culturists did not differ widely from the men and women of Hope Winston's acquaintance. The men, to be sure, had more hair (some of them were very Shagpats), and their mustaches drooped more pensively or twisted up more jauntily; the women, too, were sprucer and smarter looking than the wives and daughters of the farmers of Swiftwater; but otherwise they were plain enough, and little suggested the soul power which, the catalogue more than hinted, was peculiarly theirs. In-

deed, one soul-propagator, the size of whose portrait argued an uncommon puissance, resembled much the barber of Swiftwater, who expressed *his* soul through the medium of razor and shears.

Some of the faces were interesting, one especially so. The profile showed a high poetic brow, a thin cheek and a sensitive mouth; the hair was short and straight, and there was neither beard nor mustache. Beneath the portrait was the line: "Karl Geist, Violinist and Teacher of Theory." Hope liked this portrait above all the others, and looked at it a long time. It was such a face as you might find on a painter's canvas, with the word "Music" below it.

Of another sort was the portrait on the opposite page, that of Professor Jan Van Wart, head of the piano department, and "Liszt's favorite pupil." Van Wart had a great quantity of hair, tumbling over forehead to eyes; his face was round and fat, and its expression moony. He had evidently put on a frown before the camera, but had neglected to adjust the corners of his mouth to the corrugations of his brow.

The largest portrait, which served as frontispiece, was that of Doctor Rudolf Erdmann, president of the Colossus—a handsome man, with dark bold eyes and heavy black mustache. He suggested a stock-broker,

a merchant prince, a railway president—anything but a musician.

From the catalogue one learned that the Colossus was the largest conservatory of music in this or any other land; that it had more departments, more world-renowned instructors, more educational methods, than any other; that the conservatory building reached nearer to heaven, and contained more studios, than any other; that it graduated more students, issued more diplomas and teachers' certificates, conferred more degrees, and provided clamant lyceums with more instrumental artists and vocalists, than any twenty other conservatories combined.

The Colossus catered to every want conceivable, and there was no longer a reason why one should go abroad in search of a musical education. Atmosphere?—the gaseous envelop surrounding the Colossus contained a maximum amount of musical oxygen; the student-thousands who breathed it were a community in themselves. And where abroad were such rapid results to be obtained? "Graduated while you wait" might be the motto of the Colossus. What foreign music shop could match it?

The modest claims of the directors were backed by words of prominent citizens and newspapers. The

former felicitated themselves and fellow citizens on the possession of such a mighty engine of culture; the latter expressed satisfaction that the day of the education "made in Germany" was past. Westward the star of culture, like the star of empire, took its way.

Concerning the worth and the soul dynamics of the conservatory staff, it was only necessary to submit the names of the leading instructors. All were virtuosi of international repute. The directors had spared neither effort nor money in skimming from the musical milk-pails of the world the cream of the profession. Every instructional method in vocal and instrumental music was represented in this dazzling galaxy; every variety of temperament, from the tumultuous Slavic to the reposeful British. Positively there was nothing lacking.

This, then, was the mighty engine of soul culture, perfect in each part, perfect in all. "Come unto us," exhorted Doctor Erdmann, addressing them that dwelt in provincial outer darkness,—"come unto us, and learn to express your soul!"

"If I only could!" murmured the young woman by the river's brim.

She longed to adventure into the world beyond her little valley; a world she knew only from books and

magazines, and contact with sophisticated city relatives who came, in summer, to the valley of the Mad River,—a wonderful world in which she dwelt in thought, and to which, she felt, she naturally belonged.

CHAPTER II

SOUTHWARD

Swiftwater communicated with the world by way of Vanceburg, through which ran the railway. The valley of Mad River was narrow, and the tillable land in Swiftwater lay mainly south of the village, where the vale spread out for a few miles. The place was so small, the inhabitants so few, that social life could scarcely be said to exist. There was not even a meeting-house; the consolations of religion were no nearer than Vanceburg, and the sixteen-mile drive was a test of faith.

The Winston acres were few but fertile. They bordered the river, and gave annually a good account of themselves. The farm-house stood where highway and

river met, at a safe elevation above floodwater. It was a pleasant old place, well cared for, and presentable always.

The old-fashioned kitchen was the largest and cheeriest room in the house; and here, when supper was by and the dishes "done," the Winston family went into committee of the whole, to consider Professor Demeritt's suggestion and the conservatory catalogue.

Little Alice, naturally, brimmed over with enthusiasm. The hour had come for Princess Hope to adventure forth into the great wide world, and return in the purple chariot drawn by snow-white steeds, or birds, or butterflies. As for the Prince—

"He will be just the nicest ever!" Alice cried. "Tall and slender, with dark eyes and hair. . . ."

"Little silly!" said Hope, checking further nonsense with a hug.

"How much does this soul business cost?" inquired Farmer Winston, turning the pages of the red and gold booklet.

"It depends on the teacher; some charge more than others," said Hope. "There is a scale of prices at the back of the book."

"Um!" said the farmer.

As became a hard-headed agriculturist with an unmortgaged farm, he took a practical view of the proposition. Of soul expression through other mediums than the plow and milk-pail, he knew nothing, but he was not gainsaying their utility or superiority. He was fond of music, as we all are—or all except a few sad mortals; and he had assented readily to his wife's early suggestions regarding Hope's musical education. He did not believe she should learn overmuch. He had a brother, he remarked, who could play six tunes and no more, and he "would rather hear Ed play them six tunes than hear Paderooski."

" 'Students,' " he read aloud, " 'can obtain good board and lodging in private families for five dollars a week and upwards.' And here's twenty-five dollars for a diplomy, and ten dollars for a teacher's certificate."

"I don't wish to teach," said Hope.

"Oh, you want to be a Paderooski," rejoined the farmer good-humoredly.

Hope did not deny it.

"Show piano players make a good deal of money," remarked Mother Winston, looking up from her sewing.

The statement went unchallenged. There was a

practical side to Paderewski's profession which the farmer did not overlook. If Hope could become a "show pianist," any money spent on her would be well invested; and Hope, in her father's phrase, was "as smart as they made 'em." Even if she failed to grasp this topmost rung of the musical ladder, the teaching field would be open to her; the conservatory guaranteed both diploma and teacher's certificate. Professor Demeritt was likely "no great shakes," yet he got fifty cents an hour for adults and twenty-five cents for children.

"I do not wish to be a teacher," Hope repeated. "If I can not become what mother calls a show player, I would as soon stay in Swiftwater."

"You're likely to stay," said the farmer dryly. "I don't know where the money's to come from."

"There's the timber trade with Dan Mead," Mrs. Winston gently reminded him.

"We'll know more about *that*," he answered, "when Dan gets through geein' an' hawin'."

At this critical juncture, when the nays appeared to have it, Farmer Winston, thumbing the pages of the catalogue, happened on a paragraph in small type which had escaped even Hope's observation. The conservatory awarded annually a limited number of schol-

arships to students endowed with talent but not the means to develop it.

This seemed to fit the present case, and put a brighter face upon the matter. If a scholarship could be obtained, Farmer Winston thought. . . .

A letter was despatched to Doctor Rudolf Erdmann, president of the Colossus, and the reply came promptly. Doctor Erdmann regretted that all the *free* scholarships had been awarded; this was inevitable, as the student year had begun. However, the president begged to direct attention to the *partial* scholarships, which were to be had in much greater number.

Upon this point Doctor Erdmann was rather hazy. He quoted no figures. "In cases where a student is able to pay a small sum for the inestimable privileges of our institution," he wrote, "application for a partial scholarship should always be made. The free scholarships are restricted to those students who are absolutely without means. We shall be very glad to have Miss Winston with us, and shall unquestionably come to a financial agreement."

"Like as not he means he'll take what he can get," commented Farmer Winston, who knew a hawk from a hand-saw, in whatever quarter the wind might be.

Affairs were now at a crisis, and very little was needed to turn the scale. Happily Dan Mead gave up "geein' an' hawin'," and came to time on the timber trade. This decided that Hope should go on to the city, and make the best terms possible with the conservatory management.

"I guess they won't turn you away," observed her father.

So on a memorable morning in mid-October a modest trunk was strapped to the Winston buckboard, and Princess Hope stepped to a seat beside little Alice, who was to drive her over the mountain.

Where the highway and the river parted company, Hope checked the horse, for a last look at the clean brown current. "When the snow goes off in the spring, little sister," she said, "you must make the rounds and see how my flowers are doing. Tell them I shall come again some day."

Alice promised gravely, and they went on to Vanceburg and the railway.

It was Hope's first real journey, her first adventure beyond the valley's brim, and a measure of melancholy tinged her pleasurable anticipations. The quiet little mother had cried a good deal at parting; her father's

serious good-by was still in her ears; and every mile of the flying landscape was a mute farewell.

Silver birches that had turned to gold; maples crimson, blood-red, wine-red, not a trace of green; lindens and alders striving vainly to match the glory of the maples; back of all, the grateful green of the firs,—these, the outer walls of her happy valley, gave way with the afternoon hours to a more sophisticated countryside, to rolling fields, kempt villages, factory towns, and smoky skies.

Toward sundown she changed to another train, on the main line, and obtained a berth in a sleeping-car, the extravagant fittings of which amazed her and jarred a native appreciation of beauty unadorned. She was more impressed by the elegant "fittings" of her fellow passengers, chiefly city dames and daughters returning from the summer invasion of the provinces, attired in a style unknown to Swiftwater folk, who got their fashions from the mail-order establishments in the metropolis, along with their melodeons and red-plush furniture.

The coach filled rapidly as twilight closed in, and presently the vacant seat in Hope's section was the only one unoccupied. This at the next station was taken by a stoutish lady in black, who smiled affably

as she plumped into her allotted portion of upholstery. Hope answered the smile, and made room beside her for a part of the lady's impedimenta, the bulk and diversity of which brought a frown to the face of the porter, who did not scent a fee.

Madame was possibly forty years old, and of the build contemned by Byron—dumpy. The dominant note in her personality, which sounded so clearly that all might hear, was wide-awakeness. It sounded in her dark restless eyes, in swift movements of her hands, in little tosses of her head, and, more loudly and less pleasantly, in her voice. She appeared a "foreigner." Her complexion was swarthy, and the voice in which she addressed the conductor, in complaint against a system of car-construction that neglected to make every berth a lower, had an accent unfamiliar to the ear of Swiftwater.

"I am so large," she said to Hope, "that it is quite an effort to climb up and down."

Hope offered to exchange berths. As she had never experienced the discomforts of upper or lower, she was able truthfully to say that she had no choice in the matter.

The other protested against the sacrifice—but consented to it.

"Thank you very much," she beamed. "What a beautiful day it has been! One regrets returning to the city and leaving so much color behind. I love autumn; it is my favorite season. As George Eliot says, 'if I were a bird I should go flying about the earth in pursuit of successive autumns.'"

Hope tried to picture the stoutish lady as a bird, but with poor success. She ventured to express a preference for spring.

"Spring, too, is beautiful," said Madame. "I love spring. It was my husband's favorite season. . . . You are going through to the city?"

"Yes."

"An ideal month in which to visit it."

Hope remarked that she purposed residing in the city.

"So! You come to study music?" Madame laughed —a curious little diatonic laugh. "You wonder at my guessing ability: it is really not so remarkable. You have a musical head—I am a good deal of a phrenologist, you see; the music bumps are very large. And then, so many students come to the city at this time of year—or perhaps a little earlier."

"Yes; I am a month late," said Hope.

"Music, music—how I love it!" avowed the other,

with upturned eyes. "It is such a beautiful way to express one's soul."

The phrase of the catalogue! Evidently in the city the word soul had a wider application than in Swiftwater, where it was not a topic of every-day conversation. On Sundays the Vanceburg pastor referred to it, but always as a somewhat that required saving, not expressing: if the soul were saved, that was the blessed end of the matter. Nor could Hope pronounce the word, as many of us can, trippingly upon the tongue: occasionally to musical genius is added the great gift of humor. She imaged her timid little self passing the portals of the great city, the while a herald proclaimed: "Make way, make way for Princess Hope, who has come to express her soul!"

"Three months I have been away," pursued Madame, "and not a note of music have I heard in all that time. What a deprivation! Think of three months without Wagner!"

"Think of never having heard him at all!" said Hope, humorously touched by her own abyssal benightment.

"*Unglaublich!*" exclaimed Madame, surprised out of English. "And you a musician!"

"Not yet. You see, I come from a small village."

"But one may visit the city in the opera season," said Madame.

"I have never before been ten miles from home."

Madame could scarcely credit it. The girl did not look especially rustic. Tanned throats and rosy cheeks are common in October everywhere.

"However, I observe that you have heard of Emerson," she smiled, taking up the book which the young girl had been reading.

"My aunt sends me a great many books," said Hope. "And there is a small but very good library in Vanceburg." She laughed. "I believe I have read every book in it."

"I love Emerson," said Madame, opening the book and shutting it again. "He is so mystical."

Hope agreed, and conversation, thus agreeably established, ran on unflaggingly. Miss Winston learned that her companion was Madame Amelia Jesurin, the widow of a French count, who expressed her soul in teaching languages, both her own, which was German, and that of her lamented husband. She had, as she took occasion to confide, deeply loved this incomparable man; and his passing left such a void in her life that, no matter how many other things she loved,—autumn, spring, Wagner, ham sandwiches (they were

"discussing" the contents of their lunch-boxes),—the vacuum remained unfilled.

"Then you are a real countess," said Hope, impressed.

"*Gewiss*. But I do not use the title."

Hope wondered what little Alice would say if she knew that on the first day of her adventure into the great wide world her Princess sister had fallen in with a real live countess; the Prince and the chariot could not be far away. She smiled; then, meeting the Countess's inquiring gaze, she blushed, and explained in some confusion the source of her amusement.

Madame Jesurin entered sympathetically into the spirit of the fantasy. "I love fairy tales," she said, "and I should like to be one of the good fairies to help you find your Prince. First, what does he look like?"

Hope disclaimed meditation on the matter.

"Tall, of course," said Madame Jesurin, ignoring the disclaimer.

Hope agreed he should be tall, though it was really of no consequence.

"Dark eyes or light?"

Dark, perhaps, though light would do as well.

"We are getting on," cried the Countess merrily. "He must be tall, and dark-eyed; handsome, of course,

like a Greek god—I love Greek gods; and with a pretty silken mustache, and just the least tilt to his nose. . . . Well, child," she sighed, "I am not much of a fairy, I fear. I have no wand, and I am poor as a church-mouse; but perhaps I may be of service to you in other ways. On which side of the city shall you live?"

Hope remarked that the conservatory would assist her to find a desirable home.

"Why do you not keep house for yourself?" suggested Madame Jesurin. "It is cheaper and pleasanter than to board."

She went on to say that she lived on the north side of town, in two rooms of a humble flat kept by a Mrs. Grady; and it so happened that another pair of rooms in this flat were at present vacant. They had been occupied by two young women, music students like Hope, and had been made very cozy and comfortable. Madame Jesurin had been away three months, but it was not likely that the little rooms had been rented, as she had talked of adding them to her own establishment.

"Look out for strangers!" was the parting advice of Farmer Winston, who on a memorable occasion had been invited to invest in a hexahedral chunk of yellow

metal. But Madame Jesurin was manifestly honest, as one more experienced than Hope would have decided; and perhaps the two little rooms were just what Hope would fancy, if the conservatory could not do better; so she thanked the Countess, and promised to look at the apartments.

Madame Jesurin chatted the evening away. What a lot she knew about music—and everything else! Hope, deeply impressed by her companion's cleverness, played the part of listener most eloquently, seldom obtruding an opinion of her own. One who confessed complete ignorance of Richard Wagner's music would best sing small.

Madame touched on the advantages which the city offered to the soul yearning for full expression. What with concerts, art galleries, libraries, lectures, and so on, one could fill in every hour of the week; one grudged the hours required for sleep.

Alas, the porter was even now making up the berths.

Sleep came slowly to Hope. The upper berth was stuffy (what could the lower be?) and her head ached a little; Madame Jesurin was not a soporific. But gradually the vibration of the coach lulled her, and some time after midnight she passed into a slumber

which, though short, was dreamless and altogether refreshing.

She was astir first in the morning, for nobility sleeps late; and she was uncommonly hungry when the Countess at last made her appearance. And then a postponement of breakfast was suggested.

"They charge so much on the train," Madame Jesurin explained. "You shall take breakfast with me, if you will, and have a look at the rooms. It is only a little way to Mrs. Grady's."

Ten minutes later the porter was slapping them with an apathetic brush, and Madame Jesurin was warning Miss Winston that the city was noisy and dirty, but that she would grow to like it.

Not so sure of this was Hope when she stood without the railway station, bewildered by the din of the metropolis, the mighty roar of commerce.

"It is grand, it is epic!" Madame Jesurin shouted in her ear. "It is thus the great city expresses its soul."

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH OUR PRINCESS SETS UP A MODEST ESTABLISHMENT

While Madame Jesurin searched her hand-bag for the latch-key, Hope had a good look at the exterior of No. 69 Atwood Street. It was not promising.

The frame dwelling of two stories was old, and had not known fresh paint for a long term of years. The shutters hung off plumb; the lines of the shallow unroofed porch and of the steps leading to it no longer ran in parallels; one pane of glass in the street door was broken. The house stood back a way from the fronts of the buildings that flanked it, and in the space, on each side of the uneven brick walk, a few handfuls of grass struggled to make a lawn. All the

houses in the block were commonplace; No. 69 was only a little less attractive than its neighbors.

Madame Jesurin opened the door, and Hope followed up a steep dark stairway to an ill-lighted hall, through which wandered dismally the ghosts of innumerable boiled cabbages. Our Princess, fresh from the sweet airs and running waters of her happy valley, felt sure she could not make a home in such a shabby, smelly place. But when Madame Jesurin threw open the door to her apartments, things looked very much better.

"*Ei! Ei! Die Heinzelmännchen haben geholfen!*" cried Madame, delighted. "That good Mrs. Grady—such a thoughtful woman!—has prepared everything against my home-coming. Take off your wraps, Miss Winston. We shall have breakfast at once."

She bustled into another apartment, while Hope inspected, with interested eyes, the combination of sleeping-chamber and sitting-room.

After the big brass bed, with its pretty figured counterpane, the largest object in the room was a coal heater reaching more than half-way to the ceiling. It was a new heater, and its shiny mica eyes gave Hope a smiling welcome. Two good pieces of furniture were a bird's-eye maple dressing-table and a secretary-

bookcase, on which stood a cheap brass lamp with a large green-paper shade. A couple of easy-chairs, a good carpet, a few indifferent prints and photographs, and a chenille-clad shelf laden with small ornaments, completed the furnishings,—a cozy little home.

An odor of drawing coffee floated into the room, and on the wings of it came Madame.

"Mrs. Grady is away," she announced. "Such a hard worker, and without profit to herself! There *are* such people. Always she is helping some one still poorer. Come, we shall now have our coffee."

Hope followed to a smaller room containing a table, four deal chairs, a couch and a china closet. On a stand was a small gas stove for cooking, but this was not in use: through another doorway was visible a huge kitchen range, under full headway.

"I use Mrs. Grady's stove much of the time," Madame remarked. "Such an accommodating soul. . . . Sugar and cream in your coffee?"

Hope, though half-famished, attacked the scant breakfast deliberately; a rush would have instantly destroyed it.

"Pardon me while I peep at this letter," said Madame. . . . "*Ei! Ei!* here is good luck, in which you shall share, if you will."

Two tickets and a printed slip fell from the envelope.

"The Symphony concerts begin to-night. You are just in time. One of my pupils has sent me these subscription seats; she can not use them, as she will be out of town. You would like to go?"

"Oh, very much, indeed!" cried Hope, her face radiant. She had never heard an orchestra, but she thought it as well to reserve the disclosure; Madame's credulity had been sufficiently tested.

"Here is the programme," said the Countess. "Let us see what good things Herr Herschel has in store for us." She propped the slip of paper against the sugar bowl.

"Herr Herschel is the conductor?" Hope hazarded. She had seen the name in the newspapers.

"A wonderful man; he is reverenced as a god. . . . First, Brahms's Third Symphony. You have heard that?"

Hope laughed happily. "I have heard nothing; all will be new to me."

Madame put on a profound expression. "Brahms is very difficult to understand; he is so deep, so intellectual; so different from Wagner."

"Wagner is not intellectual, then?"

"I would not say that; but Wagner—*ach*, he is so primal, so emotional."

Hope recalled the Second Rhapsody. If Wagner were more emotional than Brahms, it might be well to take along one's smelling-salts whenever his compositions were on the programme.

"Here is indeed a treat," continued the Countess; "Madame Friedenthal is to play."

"Madame Friedenthal?"

"Surely you have heard about her. *Nein?* She is the greatest of women pianists."

"What is she to play?" Hope asked eagerly.

"Grieg—Concerto in A-minor. You do not know that either? Grieg is grand; I love Grieg. He uses such queer chords. You should hear his 'Peer Gynt.'" Madame hummed a few measures. "But you have forgotten to eat; your chop is cold, and the coffee is frappé."

She refilled the cups.

"After intermission comes Richard Strauss. 'Till Eulenspiegel'. That is comical; you can not but laugh. *Nun*, Weber's 'Invitation to the Dance', arranged by Weingartner. I saw him one day in Munich."

"Weber?"

"Weingartner. Weber is long dead," Madame Jesurin explained.

"I see."

Madame darted a sharp look at her young friend. Hope's face was innocence itself.

"Last,"—Madame's dark eyes almost crackled,—"the Prelude to 'Die Meistersinger'! Wagner! Wagner! . . . A splendid programme, and a wonderful night for you. The hall will be crowded; always it is so for the opening concert. All the musicians will be there, and the society people in the boxes. *Hélas!*" Madame relapsed into the language of her lamented husband, "how I wish I were young again. Think of it!—your first great concert."

And surely, beloved reader, if ever envy is unselfish or pardonable, it is in such circumstances. Have you ever postponed a craved experience? Have you ever set aside, unread, a Shakespeare play? Have you put anything by for the rainy day of middle age? It was only lately that the writer, in a moment of weakness, took down "King Lear," afterward to go forth and rave about it to his politely astonished friends. Alas, that gold is spent, and age so much the poorer!

Breakfast over, the Countess suggested a peep at the two little rooms, with a view to renting. With her

first glance at them Hope forgot the disembodied cabbages that haunted the hall.

The rooms were not so large or so well furnished as Madame Jesurin's; but as they gave on the street, facing east, they lay open to the morning sunshine, which was now flooding them, touching with Midas-fingers the cheap furnishings, and glorifying the features of Saint Cecilia, gazing eternally upward from out a "process" picture on the wall. In place of the fine brass bed which Madame possessed, there was a plain folding affair; and Hope liked the small open coal stove much better than the huge heater in the other apartment. Her eyes, after remarking a pretty blue carpet, a big easy-chair, a sofa, and a stand with a lamp on it, returned to an upright piano in an oak case. Surely it could not be true that this went with the rooms.

No. As Madame explained, this had been hired by the young ladies who lately vacated the rooms, and would be removed unless Miss Winston wished to retain it.

Hope had a moment of panic. Piano hire was an item overlooked in the home councils.

"How much would it be, do you suppose?" she asked.

Madame thought it would not exceed ten dollars the quarter.

"And these rooms?"

"Eight dollars the month. You can keep house for as much more, including the fuel; and that is better than you can do in a boarding-house, with one little room to live in."

While Hope was deliberating Mrs. Grady returned and took the young girl, figuratively, to her expansive bosom. Mrs. Grady's manner was large as her frame; her loud laugh bespoke good nature rather than a vacant mind. She had been absent, as Madame Jesurin surmised, on an errand of mercy.—That poor Mrs. White! Such a deal of trouble she was having with two sick "childer," and her man out of work because of the strike.

No, the vacant rooms were not yet spoken for; and sure, Mrs. Grady would be highly "plaized" should they be to the young lady's liking. At this juncture the expressman arrived with Madame Jesurin's trunk, and when he departed he took away the check for Hope's luggage.

While the Countess bustled off to set her own affairs in order, Mrs. Grady exhibited to the new tenant the simple machinery of their joint establishment.

One of the cogs was Patrick, a protégé of the landlady's. He was something more than forty years old, but he "drank like sixty," in the phrase of his patron, who still had hopes of reforming him. Patrick brought up the coal and took away the ashes; and Hope's assessment for this service would be twenty-five cents weekly. There was a gas stove in the smaller of the rooms, but Miss Winston was free to use the huge range in the Grady kitchen; there was always room on it for one more pot or pan. In brief, Mrs. Grady and her possessions were at her tenants' service. She was the most accommodating soul in the world, as Madame Jesurin frequently avowed.

Nothing could be more agreeable, reflected Hope, and she was glad to be alone, that she might curl up in the big easy-chair and look leisurely about her, mistress of all she surveyed.

"This," she remarked to herself, glancing about her new domain, "this is something like."

Her child-heart's desire to "play house" was satisfied to the full. Satisfied also was a craving for independence. Her sensations were not unlike those of the man who has pitched his tent in the heart of the wilderness, and, looking about him as the night closes in, sees everything at his hand necessary to his exist-

ence. The "shadowed leagues of slumbering sound" beyond the circle of firelight hold no disquietude for his soul.

It is delightful to be one's own mistress at eighteen, especially when one is bubbling over with health and high spirits, and heart-whole save for the claims of a chosen art. Was there ever so fortunate a girl? Hope hugged her knees in delight.

A long wardrobe in the room's far corner caught her glancing eye. She ran to it, and found the back was formed of folding-doors that once gave passage to Madame Jesurin's apartments; the light came through a crack in one of the panels. Within this recess she found wash-stand, chest of drawers, and many hooks; and she was impatient for her trunk to come, that she might distribute her small belongings.

There was not much in the smaller room; a kitchen table with a red cover, two chairs, a gas stove, and a china closet fashioned from a packing-case, the ornamentation of which suggested that the inspiration had come from the *Ladies' Home Companion.*

The piano proved a fairly good instrument; not so sweet-toned as her own, but firmer-actioned. As she sat before it she was disturbed by the reflection that two whole days had passed without practice. This

should not happen again. She would work, work. Nothing should take her mind from it. No distractions should lengthen, by so much as a day, her journey to the goal she was impatient to reach. She clasped her hands above her head, and looked upward with Saint Cecilia.

Madame Jesurin knocked at the door to announce that her cupboard was as bare as Mother Hubbard's, and that she was going a-marketing. "You will wish to lay in supplies yourself," she suggested; and Hope, assenting delightedly, ran for her hat.

The grocer forgot the Saturday rush in his desire to serve the fresh-faced girl who took so remarkable an interest in tea and coffee and butter and other commonplace commodities, and promised that the things should be delivered immediately, even if he had to hire an extra man to transport them. At the butcher's the proprietor of a restaurant, who had been waiting his turn to place a large order, stepped aside with a smile, that Hope might purchase three little chops. The baker's *Frau* beamed upon her. The coal merchant felt that a ray of sunshine had straggled into his grimy box of an office.

The watchful eye of Madame Jesurin oversaw every purchase, and Hope learned a few things about eco-

nomical buying. Economy with Madame was a fine art. As she explained, she had fallen upon church-mouse days since the demise of her never-to-be-forgotten husband, who had left her nothing more substantial than a fragrant memory.

The first luncheon in the new home proved an entire success; for Hope had not studied Bach's Inventions to the exclusion of Mrs. Rorer's. The Countess and Mrs. Grady were invited in, and accepted with pleasure, the former contributing an excellent appetite, the latter a pie.

In the chatter over the tea-cups, apropos of early rising and late, Hope learned that Mrs. Grady was astir mornings at as young an hour as the most industrious Swiftwater agriculturist; for John Grady, the nominal head of the house, expressed his soul a great distance from home, and must ride an hour and a half in street-cars, clinging to a strap. A round-about way, but he got transfers; by the shorter route he must pay two fares.

"How they have to count the pennies!" Hope thought. "And how I shall have to count them, too."

Madame Jesurin was suddenly reminded of Alice Winston and the dream chariot, and, receiving permission from Miss Winston, entertained Mrs. Grady

with the tale. That genial soul bent a shrewd glance on the face and figure of the heroine, who was at that moment peeping into the tea-pot to cover a slight confusion following a compliment of Madame's, and she remarked with the air of a prophet:

"Ye'll not be lackin' princes, my dear. An' sure, the lucky one has Ann Grady's congratulations."

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCING DOCTOR RUDOLF ERDMANN AND MR. ARTHUR WEST

In a neighborhood of imposing buildings, the Colossus Conservatory of Music was architecturally the most remarkable. Indeed, the red-and-gold catalogue might have boasted that, in addition to more studios, more instructors, more methods than any similar institution, the Colossus possessed more architecture. Just as within there was something to please every taste, so without there was something to take captive every eye.

Lacking the catalogue, which contained a very good picture of the structure, I do not now venture to say whether in this architectural opulence there was more of the glory of Greece than the grandeur of Rome, or

whether Rome had a shade the better of it. I seem to recall a Greek colonnade and a balustrade of the same order; the broken pediments surmounting the sixth story were, I believe, Renaissance; and I am under the impression that the Gothic note was introduced in the elaborate attic story,—the rest is hazy. Only one detail need be commended to the reader's appreciation—the crowning glory at the roof line. Who that has seen them can ever forget the six statues in a row?—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Wagner. What could be finer?

The Colossus was narrow and deep, and ten stories high. Among the students it went by the name of "The Grindstone," perhaps from the tint and texture of the rock that faced its walls, but more likely from the suggestion it held of unremitting activity.

No grindstone whirled more busily. Upon its fleet periphery poured an unending stream of dullness, whose particles were polished after a fashion, then pushed off by the pressure from behind. There was space above the portals of the building for an allegorical figure of a Young Lady from the Provinces Turning a Grindstone; but the idea had been overlooked in the architectural plans, which took in almost everything else.

Our young lady from the provinces, unaccustomed to a crowd, was a trifle bewildered. It was Saturday afternoon, and the Grindstone was revolving madly. A stream of young women with music-rolls poured into the building, while another stream flowed out; occasionally a male student was observable. Four elevators were doing a "capacity" business.

"What a lot of people are interested in music!" said Hope to herself. "I wonder if this is the office."

No; this was the music store, and curiosity took her the length of it. Every stool before every counter was occupied, and as many more people waited attention. A young man with piano hair requested "the Brahms waltzes, for four hands"; the clerk departed to find out, from some one wiser, who Brahms was. A man who looked as if he might be a music teacher was telling a bright-faced girl that she ought to get Hummel's sonatas; they were very effective. Over in a corner a blond female was testing, at the piano, the effectiveness of the latest sentimental song. In another corner an enraptured crowd had gathered around a man who was treading a mechanical piano-player. Another group was buying concert tickets; still another was lined up before the cashier's window, paying for pianos on the instalment plan.

Yes, indeed; a lot of people are interested in music.

Hope left the store, and, crossing the vestibule, entered another department. This looked more like the office of the Colossus, and it proved so to be. A great deal seemed to be going on here, too. Typewriters were thumping on their machines, clerks were bustling from desk to desk, while, outside the rail, a long line of Young Ladies from the Provinces were oiling the Grindstone through the cashier's window.

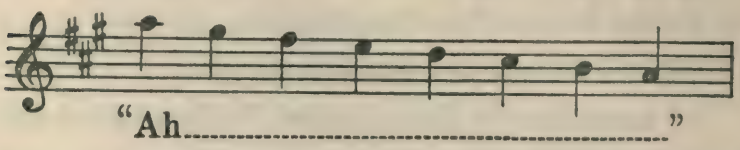
To whom should Hope apply? Perhaps President Erdmann, with whom the correspondence had been held, was the proper person to see. And where might Doctor Erdmann be found?

"Third octave. Take the elevator," an office boy instructed her.

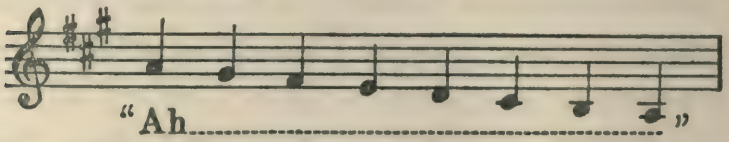
"I suppose he means third *floor*," said Hope. And as everybody seemed to be using the elevators, and nobody the stairs, she decided to walk. The term "octave" amused her, and she counted to see whether the octaves contained the proper number of "steps." Eight was right; but there were two flights of steps to each story. "So really," said Hope, "the president is on the sixth octave." Evidently the bright person who had coined the term octave had not taken the steps into consideration.

The second floor was given over to the recital hall. A concert was going on here, and Hope paused to listen; but there was such a clatter at the door she could hear little else, so she proceeded up another double octave.

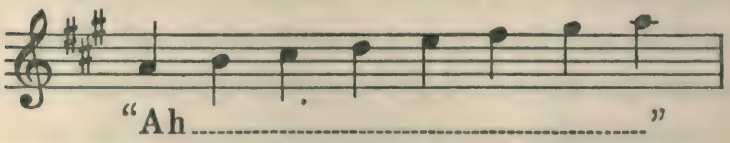
As she turned the first flight of steps she collided with a young man who was running down, singing:



"Oh, I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, and was off down the second flight,—



As Miss Winston, mystified, went on her way, she heard the ascending scale. The young man was coming back—



They reached the top step together.

"Warm work!" he remarked, mopping his brow and taking a deep breath.

"I should think it might be," said Hope, smiling. The young man appeared entirely sane, despite his antics.

"My new method!" he explained. "Strengthens the lungs wonderfully. If one is going to sing Wagner, one must have lungs like a blacksmith's bellows, or something of that sort."

Miss Winston assented politely.

"Screech, scrape, or scramble?" the young man inquired, putting away his handkerchief. "Pardon me," he added less volubly, noting her puzzled expression; "I took you for one of the students."

While he spoke he looked at Hope attentively, and observed that she was rather tall, and had large blue eyes (or were they gray?) set wide and closely neighbored by level brows, the lashes long. Her hair was chestnut, with glints in it, brushed down plainly on each side the face, and massed at the nape of a long neck. "She'll do," he decided.

"Why—I *am* a student," said Hope; "that is, I expect to be."

"I see." He nodded and smiled. " 'Screech, scrape and scramble' is conservatory slang. What I meant was, do you sing, play the violin, or the piano?"

"Oh! . . . I scramble."

"And I screech—but you know that. What method shall you take?"

"I haven't the least idea. But I hope I shan't have to run up and down stairs."

"It might help your pedaling."

"If I were going to play Wagner? I suppose there are lots of methods."

"Dozens of them. I try 'em all, and trust to luck to hit off the right one. May I introduce myself? My name is Arthur West."

His eyes politely petitioned for a like revealment of identity. It was granted graciously.

Mr. West bowed. "You haven't joined the Grindstone's hallelujah chorus yet, I believe you said."

"I have called to-day to make the arrangements. Perhaps you can tell me where Doctor Erdmann's office is."

He pointed to a door legended "Private."

"That doesn't mean anything. Walk right in."

"Thank you." She smiled and moved away.

Mr. West bowed again, and with a wave of his hand he was off, singing himself down the stair. His compass appeared to be two octaves.

There never was any difficulty in reaching Doctor

Rudolf Erdmann. As Mr. West said, the "Private" on the outer door signified nothing. The president of the Colossus did not fence himself with servitors in livery. Any person who wished to see him so informed his secretary, and was instructed to walk in. The Grindstone revolved smoothly. Doctor Erdmann had nothing on his mind more weighty than chatting affably with visitors and corresponding with the Young Ladies from the Provinces, who furnished the motive power.

Doctor Erdmann was a large man and handsome, as the portrait in the catalogue showed him. In speaking of this portrait it was mentioned that the eyes were dark and bold: these went very well with the thick black hair and heavy mustache; and for a man who wrote and talked such a deal about the soul and its expression, his neck was a trifle too short and thick, and his lips were over-full.

His manner was suave—"oily," said a few persons who did not like him. It is impossible to satisfy some people, who twist our virtues into vices, if we have not the luck to please them.

Doctor Erdmann was unengaged when the secretary announced Miss Winston. His greeting was sympathetically genial.

"Miss Winston? Yes-yes. Very glad to see you —very." A warm hand-clasp, a look of frank admiration. "Will you sit down? . . . From Swiftwater—yes-yes. I recall our correspondence."

Doctor Erdmann's "yes-yes" was the quintessence of his suavity. There are as many ways of saying "yes-yes" as of spelling "muskallonge." As Doctor Erdmann enunciated them, each syllable was a purr, slightly crescendo, accompanied by an assentant nod.

"We talked of a partial scholarship, I believe," he preluded.

She testified to the excellence of his memory.

"Yes-yes. . . . Well—er—what are you able to pay?"

She mentioned the sum which her father thought he might wrest from the Winston acres.

"Yes-yes. Hmh! . . . That is not a great deal, not a great deal."

It did seem—now—ridiculously small. Hope had another moment of panic. Suppose, after all—

"However," Doctor Erdmann continued, rubbing one hand over the other, "our motto has always been, Encourage talent at any price. No student should be turned away so long as she has a dollar. No soul should go unexpressed."

Hope murmured her appreciation of this liberal policy.

"Of course, in the case of a partial scholarship, where the conservatory gets what it can, the student —er—gets what *she* can. We will do all that is possible, Miss Winston."

She was properly grateful.

"What line of study do you intend?—the voice?" he asked.

"Piano."

"Ah, that is unfortunate. A fine presence counts for so much in the vocal field, and goes for so little in the other. Has your voice ever been tried?"

Hope, rosy from the pointed compliment, replied that she sang a little, but had never thought seriously of her voice. Her ambition was to become a concert pianist.

"Yes-yes. Well, I have no doubt you will succeed." ("About one in ten thousand *does* succeed," the twinkle in his eye added.) "Do you intend teaching?"

"I do not."

He turned to his desk, remarking: "Then you will wish the artist, not the business course."

As he picked up his pen Hope noted a peculiar ring of Indian workmanship on the little finger of his

plump white hand. The stone was a cabochon emerald set in a band of dull steel inlaid with gold, and around it was coiled a golden serpent.

Doctor Erdmann wrote something on a card: "Present this at the office," he said, "and your application will be made out in form. The examiner will then hear you play, and will report to me. If the report is favorable, as I have no doubt it will be, your studies may begin at once."

Hope took the card, saying that she hoped she should prove worthy of his confidence.

"You have the artist hand," he said, possessing himself of it. "Strong, rather short fingers; perhaps better adapted for the violin." He surrendered the hand reluctantly. "Have you relatives in the city?"

Informed that she was a stranger in a strange land, he referred to the paragraph in the catalogue stating that the conservatory, if desired, would assist students to find desirable homes. Miss Winston further informed him of the modest establishment at No. 69 Atwood Street.

"Yes-yes," he said, "I have some knowledge of Madame Jesurin. An excellent woman; there was some talk of her teaching here. Very glad you are so pleasantly located. You understand, Miss Winston, we feel

—er—a certain measure of responsibility for young ladies intrusted to our care."

Another warm, very warm hand-clasp as Hope rose to go.

"At this time Monday, my dear Miss Winston. I shall have the examiner's report by then." He accompanied her to the outer door. "The report will be satisfactory, I am sure. Good afternoon."

His beady eyes followed her until she turned the stair, and the sighting poise of his head was not lost on the secretary, who remarked familiarly when Doctor Erdmann turned:

"Mighty pretty girl that."

"Hmh!" muttered the president of the Colossus, and returned thoughtfully to his desk.

The young man to whom Hope presented Doctor Erdmann's card asked a great many questions in making out her application for a position in what Mr. West called "the Grindstone's hallelujah chorus." What was Miss Winston's age? Had she ever been declined by any other musical conservatory? Was there any history of musical talent in her family? With whom had she studied last? Possibly he set down, without inquiry, the color of her eyes and hair, and noted her complexion. She was then directed to

Professor Notensatt, Studio No. 10, fourth octave; and here, in the anteroom, she found two other young women waiting, while from behind a light swinging door came sounds of a piano under torture.

Presently the fearsome noises ceased, and a young woman emerged, followed by a youth in livery, who beckoned to one of the waiting damsels. Hope did not have to tarry long for her turn; the examinations were singularly brief.

Professor Notensatt was a stoop-shouldered, gaunt-faced man with weary-looking eyes. He glanced carelessly through Miss Winston's application paper, then jerked an arm toward the piano.

"Play!" he said.

She sat to the instrument nervously. "What shall I play?" she asked.

"Anything," he replied indifferently.

"Bach?"

"Bach will do."

She discharged a three-part Invention at him.

"Very good!" he said, and his voice betrayed an awakened interest. "Play something else,"—as she rose.

She sat down again, uncertain whether to feel encouraged or the reverse. Neither of the damsels who

preceded her had played twice; perhaps their talent was more obvious.

"Shall I play a Beethoven Sonata?"

"One movement will suffice."

She selected the last movement of the "Moonlight" —dear old battered composition.

The examiner made no comment, further than to say, "That will do." But he had come out of his trance of indifference; that was something.

Flushed with this small triumph, Hope tripped springily down the stair, humming the scale after the fashion of Mr. Arthur West, and smiling at recollection of him.

There was time before dinner to write a long letter home, in which she set down a faithful account of her adventures to date. An inclosure was for Alice Winston.

"Dear little sister," it ran, "I have wandered a long way, and have had a very good time. I have not yet come upon any houses made of gingerbread, nor have I met with any fairies; but then, I have not really needed anything, and fairies do not appear unless you are in some sort of distress. On the other hand, I have not had to flee from any dwarfs or witches, though I *was* almost run down in the street by a big

red dragon with shiny eyes and dreadful gassy breath.

"I have made the acquaintance of only one Prince thus far, and I am afraid that he isn't the one with the purple chariot, as he does not answer your description. He is not tall and slender, but short and inclined to be stout; and he has blue eyes and light hair which curls very prettily. He is a singer, and his name is Arthur West. Your affectionate sister,

"Princess Hope."

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING A CONCERT, AND SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE THERE

Hope was a-tingle from top to toe.

The immense auditorium, resplendent in red and gold, the multitudinous lights, the adumbrations behind-scenes of the wonderful music to come,—rill of melody from flute, sigh from horn, strident fifth from violin,—the chatter, the laughter, the gleaming shoulders and the jewels of Society, the scent of royal roses: what fairy court could match it?

A bell rang sharply.

"Here come the band!" cried Madame Jesurin. "How like ants they swarm in, *nicht wahr?* . . . The applause is for the favorites," she shrilled in her

companion's ear. "See! That is Brückner who has just entered—the large man with the 'cello. Behind him—that little chap—is Herr Trautmann, the concertmeister. He is fine; he never misses a note!"

Madame prattles to inattentive ears: Hope's attention is riveted to the picture in the great gilt frame of the proscenium arch. Elbows on balcony rail, face between hands, rapt, she watches the stage door for the entrance of Herr Herschel, who, Madame has said, is reverenced as a god. She trembles with excitement when a door opens and a man with music comes out. But it is only the librarian; the audience continues to chatter.

Again the door opens, and this time there is no mistake. The hall rings with the cheers of thousands and the fanfare of the band, which one hears only on opening night. Hope presses her hands tightly against her cheeks.

Silence.

The conductor has bowed his acknowledgments, and is facing his men. Hope closes her eyes; but the picture remains with her, and scarcely less vivid. She draws a quick breath when Herr Herschel raps smartly against his music-stand; and though her eyes are lidded, her leaping heart anticipates the loud, long

chords that usher in the Third Symphony of Johannes Brahms.

Her face aches from the pressure of her hands; but with the first stroke of the buoyant opening melody the tension is relieved, and she is floating, floating—in cockle-shell of Culprit Fay, on the wayward waters of the Mad River; whirling through rapids, drifting over deep and unvexed pools, blown hither and thither by the winds of counterpoint; out of sunshine into shadow, and out into the light again; in her ears the underbreath of wind-stirred tree-tops, the piping of birds, the rumbling of Parnassian thunders, the faint notes of Titania's trumpets, invitation to an elfish dance. . . .

You and I, reader, as we realize regretfully, are no longer capable of this detachment, this complete absorption. When *we* go to a concert we take along our business and domestic affairs, and we do not check them at the door, with our hats and opera cloaks. Let Beethoven thunder as he will, and Schubert carol, and Tschaikowsky weep, we give them only part of our attention. Americans spend more money on music, and hear less of it, than any other people on the globe.

It isn't that we do not care to listen; we simply can not listen as we should. What seem to us the im-

portant things of life are with us always; we can not escape from them; we fancy we have put them by, but they pop into our heads unbidden and unwelcome.

With an occasional exception. I have in mind a legal gentleman, really fond of music, who confesses that he welcomes a concert whenever he has a perplexing case to turn over in his mind. He finds, he tells me, that music, particularly orchestral music, lubricates his brain machinery; and he traces his success in a certain celebrated case to the stimulating influence of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. To what practical uses may the product of our genius come, Horatio! . . . .

Hope unclosed her eyes with a start. The audience was applauding, and Herr Herschel was bowing.

"Always there is a wait after the first movement, to allow late-comers to take seats," Madame Jesurin said, in explanation of the band's idleness. "Was it not fine? I perfectly adore Brahms, even though he is so hard to understand. Did you not find it difficult?"

Hope drew a deep breath. "It was very beautiful. Did it mean something besides that?"

"*Gewiss.* It is all here—in the programme notes. They are written by Doctor Dudelsack, of your conservatory. One should read them while the music is

playing. See, in the next movement of the Symphony you shall observe this:

"'In soundless solitudes of mountain heights things unutterable save in tones of sweetest harmony move you, as step by step, to clarinets and added flutes and horns, the gray colors of dawn merge with those of deepest orange, then of brightest gold, of radiant-faced Day, or as the heavy robe of twilight settling down, to clarinets doubled in lower fagots, brings rest and peace to man and beast, and—

"'"*Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh;*
In allen Wipfeln—"'"

Madame got no further. Herr Herschel rapped attention; the buzz of conversation died, as the wind dies in woods; the serene Andante of the symphony began. And again Hope floated away in her fairy craft, drifting on brown water among reeds; listening, now to the quiet narrative of the song-sparrow, now to the plaintive appeal of the meadow-lark.

Yes; it was difficult to understand, this music; everything is that is beautiful: the first marsh-marigolds of spring, shadows sweeping over meadows, pelting showers from a laughing sky, the rose-light over the valley, the many, many voices of the river. . . .

The general chatter broke out afresh; the players set their instruments in tune; Conductor Herschel retired.

Hope turned to the programme. The next number was Madame Friedenthal's: "Grieg—Concerto for pianoforte, A-minor, Opus 16."

"How is it possible to hear the piano above the orchestra?" she asked Madame Jesurin.

"*Ach,* that is the artist. You shall see. Madame Friedenthal rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm. She has hands and arms of steel."

A ripple of applause betokened the reëntrance of the conductor, who paused for a word with the concert-master. Hope folded her arms across the rail and watched the stage door intently, imaging a massive woman with village blacksmith hands and arms, bared for action, passing the portal with majestic stride. Instead, a woman of slight physique, whose shoulders stooped a little, entered hurriedly and half-ran (perhaps "tripped" would be better) to the piano. With one hand resting on the instrument, she bowed right, left, and straight ahead, then took her seat.

Herr Herschel, leaning on his desk, awaited her nice adjustment to the work in hand. This required half a minute or more. Madame placed her feet on

the pedals, and prepared her skirts against a possible entanglement. She rose and depressed the piano stool perhaps an inch. She sat down and adjusted her skirts a second time. She hitched the stool a bit forward and a trifle to one side. She gave a final critical glance at her feet. Satisfied, she placed her crumpled handkerchief at the right of the keyboard, and folded her hands in her lap. Herr Herschel lifted his baton.

Hope hardly heard the opening measures of the concerto. Her mind was on the pianist. "How self-possessed!" she thought. "How wonderfully calm! It is I that am nervous."

Should *she* ever dare to front so vast an audience, even were opportunity to come? Oh, the toil to win to such a moment: imagination sought to compass it. She had worked so hard, yet knew so very little—a few pages of Bach, of Beethoven, of Czerny. What a ridiculous figure she would cut in Madame's place: an autumn leaf on the wings of the whirlwind, yet presuming to direct the storm!

Thrice-blessed Princess Hope! She had builded better than she knew, and was wiser than she thought herself. Of such is the kingdom of the great. . . .

The tempest blew itself out. The concerto was ended, and the house rose at Madame Friedenthal.

Conductor Herschel congratulated her, and a part of the orchestra followed her from the stage.

The performance astounded Hope, but nobody else seemed surprised; those about her applauded heartily, noisily; but she read no astonishment in their faces. It was all so old to them, so new to her. But can such work ever cease to challenge amazement?

She remarked something of the sort to Madame Jesurin.

"Nobody thinks about technic these days," said the Countess.

"But I did not seem to listen to the music itself. It was not like the symphony."

"Concertos are addressed to the head, not to the heart. They are show pieces for the fingers."

"Then why should nobody think about technic?"

"She will play again," the Countess exclaimed, her attention on Madame Friedenthal, who, after half a dozen recalls, was again at the piano. "It will be a Chopin nocturne, I hope. I love Chopin!"

But instead, Madame Friedenthal played Schubert's "Hark, Hark, the Lark" (the Liszt arrangement), and Hope experienced a new emotion. The Grieg had interested and amazed her; the Brahms had stirred the depths of her soul, but had left her clear-eyed. Now

the appeal of simple, exquisite beauty brought a lump into her throat, and her eyes filled. She had a desire to rise, to soar with the lark, to sing at Heaven's gate. She clutched the arms of her seat: the pianist fascinated her; she felt impelled toward her as ship's nails to magnetic mountain. But the stage was so far away, and the abyss between frightened her. . . . Madame Jesurin gently squeezed her arm; the touch restored her.

"She is a witch!" declared the Countess, when the pianist vanished. A young man beside her turned his head, nodded and smiled. Madame had echoed his thought.

Acclamation eliciting no further favors from the pianist, the audience began to rise for the intermission. Madame Jesurin suggested that they descend to the foyer, to glimpse a few celebrities.

With these the Countess seemed to have at least a visual acquaintance; and as they circled with the stream she pointed out significant chips on the current.

That portly dame in green silk was "old lady Keith," the famous dowager, a prodigious tuft-hunter. *Ach*, that distinguished-looking gentleman with the pompadour was Doctor Dudelsack, who wrote the analytical notes for the Symphony pro-

grammes. That dreamy individual with the mop of black hair was a pianist, famous in the concert world for his Chopin playing, and in divorce courts for his incompatibility of temper. And so on. . . .

In an eddy of the stream, whither a counter-current drifted them, Hope came on Mr. Arthur West. His face expressed his pleasure at this second meeting.

"Great night, isn't it?" he said gaily. "Friedenthal's a wonder. May I present Miss Matheson? Miss Winston, Flora."

The tall, fashionably-gowned young woman who accompanied Mr. West murmured her pleasure, and both were charmed to make acquaintance of Madame Jesurin.

"Friedenthal uses the Leschetitzky method," Mr. West informed Miss Winston. "I call it the best of the lot, though Miss Matheson pretends to have found a better."

Miss Matheson declined debate. "Are you studying at the Colossus?" she asked Hope.

"I begin next week."

"She scrambles," Mr. West volunteered.

Madame Jesurin was enlightened as to the term. She laughed her little diatonic laugh. "American slang is so picturesque. I love it."

They cited certain felicities in our shirt-sleeved vernacular, Hope shyly observing Mr. West's companion.

A man's criticism would have been summed up in the word "thoroughbred." Flora Matheson was a large, shapely, vital young woman, compelling masculine admiration, disarming her sex's criticism. A girl of high spirit, you would say; withal no trace of haughtiness. Miss Winston decided she would like Miss Matheson if circumstances threw them together.

They spoke of Richard Strauss, next on the programme. Madame Jesurin had seen him once, on the Ringstrasse in Vienna.

"Churchill Gray knows him very well," Miss Matheson remarked to Mr. West.

"Speak of angels," said the young man. "There's Church yonder, talking with Karl Geist."

At the name Geist, Miss Winston pricked up her ears, and, following the direction of Mr. West's nod, she saw the original of the portrait in the red-and-gold booklet.

She had fancied Geist tall, but he lacked half a head of it, and he was physically slight. As to the face, the portrait failed of justice,—a gentle scholarly face; a winning personality, if eye-evidence

were trustworthy. Geist was in street dress, the wrinkles in which attested his indifference to things sartorial. His black bow tie with flowing ends was negligently adjusted, a soft brown hat was crushed under his arm, a red carnation was fastened in his coat.

The gentleman with whom he was talking was in evening dress. His back was turned toward Hope, but the tall slender form seemed curiously familiar. The negligent attitude, the tilted head, the trick of passing hand through hair, clamored at the gates of her memory; yet the circle of her acquaintances was so small that she could account for every person in it. She wished Mr. Gray, as his name appeared to be, would turn his head; but he was listening attentively to Karl Geist, who talked rapidly and earnestly, with many nervous gestures.

" 'Till Eulenspiegel', yes, that is not so difficult to understand," Madame Jesurin was saying. "But 'Zarathustra'!—*ach*, that is a hard nut to crack."

"I decline to break my intellectual teeth on it," said West. "But here comes a capital pair of nut-crackers."

Geist and his companion were approaching, but only Geist reached them; Gray was captured by "old

lady Keith," who tapped him amicably with her fan. Hope now had a view of his face; it was not one she had seen before—in her present incarnation, at least.

Mr. Geist was presented to Madame Jesurin and Miss Winston.

"And how did you like the concerto?" Miss Matheson asked him.

"Good work," he replied. "But too fast, quite too fast."

"This is a rapid age, Herr Professor. We must keep up with the metronome."

"The devil's metronome. One can't hear the music for its infernal clatter." He shrugged. "Technic worship; speed madness. They all get it."

"Friedenthal's a wonder," Mr. West again affirmed. "She's got more tricks than a Hindoo."

"Tricks?" Geist smiled scornfully. "Hard work."

Miss Matheson sighed. "Well, *that's* a trick, and one I despair of learning."

"Many of us know the trick, but do it clumsily," said Madame Jesurin.

"Well, to me it seems very much like making an omelette in a gentleman's high hat," West protested, in support of his sleight-of-hand theory.

"That, too, requires a world of technic," Miss

Matheson declared. And to Geist: "What were you and Churchill talking about so earnestly?"

"The Brahms quintette."

"I love Brahms! He is so intellectual!" Madame Jesurin took occasion to exclaim.

"Mr. Gray is also a Brahms enthusiast," said Flora. "He and Mr. Geist have some hot arguments over Johannes."

"Gray plays favorites; I don't," Geist observed dryly.

"And what was the particular bone of contention to-night?"

"Why, I merely remarked that Brahms should have made his quintette a quartette, as he didn't know what to do with his second violin."

Miss Matheson laughed: "The king can do no wrong. Of course Churchill would deny that his beloved Brahms was ever in doubt about *anything*. Are you fond of Brahms, Miss Winston?"

"I have heard only to-night's symphony—and a rhapsody," Hope answered.

"Oh, yes," nodded Flora. "I have a chum, Rhoda Weathers, who is working on one of the rhapsodies—the second, I believe."

A bell signaled the end of the intermission, and the

little party dispersed, with expressions of mutual pleasure in the encounter.

As Hope moved toward the staircase, Churchill Gray, released from his detaining dowager, brushed by. Their eyes met for an instant, and her heart beat rapidly as she went up the stair—perhaps from the exertion of the climb.

CHAPTER VI

AN OLD RELIGION AND A NEW WOMAN

Happy as a lark, without the lark's proclivity to early rising, Princess Hope lazed amid the draperies of her couch in a flood of morning sunlight. Her abundant chestnut hair, borrowing gold from Phœbus, rippled over the pillow. Plump throat and rounded arms to match the muslin's whiteness were grudgingly revealed by the unfastened short-sleeved nightrobe, watchful as duenna of the charms it screened. Her hands were clasped beneath her head; her eyes were curtained against the sunlight; along her parted lips a smile played lambently. She was in tune with the instant and the infinite—spiritually, sensuously content.

What a yesterday! Its history was traced in char-

acters of gold that danced before her inward eye like Wordsworth's daffodils. Midnight had struck before she sought her rest; for Madame Jesurin's tongue, set in motion by the "Meistersinger" prelude, had run on "Lohengrin," and "Tannhäuser," and "The Ring of the Niebelungen", from the aquatics of the Rhine Maidens to the passing of Walhalla and its gods. A visitor from Mars would not have harkened to the story of our planet more eagerly than Hope listened to this most fascinating tale of faëry. In consequence she had not troubled to light her scant preparations for slumber, and had literally tumbled into bed.

She glanced around the room, and vowed a penance for her lack of tidiness. Shoes and bonnet, stockings, gown, were tossed about in a "sweet disorder" scarcely to bewitch even the poet of "Hesperides." Her eye lighted on the concert programme, lying beside the bed, and she reached for it, smilingly recollective of the raptures of Doctor Dudelsack.

The concert being sped, it might be well to learn what it was all about; for evidently 'twas a most recondite matter. She turned to the notes descriptive of the symphony, and continuing where Madame Jesurin had broken off (omitting the Goethe, which she did not understand), she read:

"And then again, when, pregnant by the sun's warm beams, the mountains do with diamonds teem, the dancing nymphs (woodwind doubled above and below) to play invite; and peasants young and old surcease of sorrow seek in laughter, frolic song. Now, in deepest tonal brown, steal in the double-basses, fearful of disturbing the matutinal hush. And now, awed by the dazzling sight (chords in brass, obligato in strings), the harmonies again take wing and vanish, the birdlet fearing to do aught but lisp in evanescent tones. . . .

Pshaw! The rays of morning reduced Dudelsack to a mush. Hope flung the programme at the wall and dropped back among the pillows.

It was Sunday morning; the house was not yet astir; the piano need not be opened; and it was so pleasant to laze and call back yesternight—the music, the lights, the faces: one face among all the others, seen for an instant only, but unforgetable: a dark face, with forehead high and rounding back, and full over steady hazel eyes.

The Prince of the Heart of Gold! Oh, there wasn't a doubt of it.

"Churchill," Miss Matheson called him; "Churchill Gray." She murmured the name softly, twice. Yes, it fitted; it was not commonplace, nor was it "novelly." He was young, and uncommonly good to look on; he

was a Brahms enthusiast, and he knew Richard Strauss very well: this was the sum of her knowledge. Was he a musician? Probably. She would know in good time.

Puff! A breeze from the Land of Common Sense blew her soap bubbles all away. "Hark, Hark, the Lark" scampered through her head, and the suggestion shamed her lie-abed laziness. She sprang up, humming the tune, and began to set herself and her establishment in order.

Madame Jesurin came in after breakfast to inquire whether her young friend was a church-goer. Hope was able to reply that when at home she attended services in Vanceburg as regularly as the weather permitted. Church-going was a convention in the Winston family, faithfully observed except when the roads were uncommonly bad. As to religion, she had no preference; all creeds, she hoped, were good.

Madame Jesurin likewise avowed the most liberal attitude toward religion. Some people complain that there are too many creeds; that was nonsense, said Madame. There are as many soul-needs as creeds; and certain restless souls not easily satisfied (Madame for one), must search years before they find the particular creeds they crave.

Hope was reminded of Mr. Arthur West and vocal methods. "I try 'em all," said that young man, "and trust to luck to hit off the right one."

"Of late years," remarked Madame, "I have turned more and more to the occult, and at present I am much interested in the faith of Buddha. This morning I attend the first Buddhist services to be held publicly in this city. Perhaps you would like to go."

Miss Winston thought it would be interesting.

It proved to be.

The services were held in the parlor of a third-rate hotel, and some fifty persons, for varying reasons, were gathered to attend them. Madame Jesurin and Hope took seats, and exchanged good mornings with a friendly dame, who spoke approvingly of the weather. Madame Jesurin quoted George Eliot's apostrophe to autumn; and while her elders discussed a remarkable October, Hope looked about her curiously, contrasting the incongruous *mise en scène* and motley audience with the church auditorium and congregation of convention.

Ten or a dozen well-dressed, alert-looking women, a newspaper man, and a score of Japanese made up the bulk of the audience; the rest invited the adjective nondescript: faded folk, scant of chin and forehead,

vacuous-eyed, oddly attired—first to flock to the feet of a new Messiah, or to give assent to the proposition that we of earth are living at the center of a globe of glass; or that our planet is a plane, or an isosceles triangle. There's nothing round or flat, but thinking makes it so.

In an American metropolis one can start a new religion at any time, at any street corner. All one needs is a strong voice and a soap-box, and the latter need not be insisted on. If one operate at night a torch will be found useful: it attracts moth-souls, and has its value as a symbol. For creed, a few facts, such as: a straight line is the shortest distance between two points; the sun is ninety-three millions of miles from the earth; Rome was not built in a day. From these premises one may reason to any desired conclusions. The recipe for a new religion is not unlike that for rabbit pie: first catch your major premise; the rest is simple.

Bits of the whispered conversation between the friendly dame and Madame Jesurin came to Hope's ears; as: "That is Mrs. West, nearest to Sister Isabelle; Mrs. West is president of our woman's club. Sister Isabelle spoke to us Thursday night; she is Spanish, and was formerly a Catholic nun."

Hope's eyes traveled to Mrs. West, a tall woman handsomely gowned in black, who sat a little apart from the rest of the audience; thence to Sister Isabelle, a frail body, robed and bonneted in white, whose thin, austere face, lit by the candle-gleam of the Past, contrasted sharply with the complacent features of the club-woman, illuminated by the arc-light of the Palpitating Present.

"I perfectly adore the occult," Madame Jesurin was saying, when Sister Isabelle rose, to enjoin silence with a gentle gesture.

"We shall begin with music, if some one will volunteer." She indicated a piano. "Almost anything will do," she entreated, with a smile of rare sweetness.

No one rising immediately, Madame Jesurin turned to Hope: "Will *you* not oblige, Miss Winston?"

Miss Winston held back, embarrassed under the glances turned in her direction; but as nobody else was able or willing to respond, she got up at last and crossed to the piano, wondering what she could play that would not be inappropriate to so solemn an occasion. "Almost anything," Sister Isabelle had said; perhaps the Andante from the "Sonate Pathétique," which was grave and sweet, would answer. Encour-

aged by a nod and a smile from Mrs. West, she began it.

Her "début" passed off creditably. She played the Andante, she thought, better than ever before. An offering to Buddha, it seemed to require a meaning, or a beauty, more than musical, and this she hoped she had given to it; but whether she had been able to communicate her mood to her listeners she could not say. When she returned to her seat Madame Jesurin beamed on her, pressed her arm, and whispered: "Grand! I love that!"

The service went on. Sister Isabelle read the Scriptures and interpreted the sublime verities of Gautama. These made no strong appeal to Hope's imagination. To a young woman of eighteen, vibrant with the joy of living and stirred by remembrance of a pair of steady hazel eyes, Nirvana is a particularly empty word. The Offering of the Flowers enlisted her more sympathetic interest, perhaps because of the incongruity of symbols and ideas, rather than in spite of it. A third-rate hotel is a poor temple; the marble footing of a tawdry mirror is a barren altar; and a hotel pitcher, so suggestive of ice, chills the warmest imagination.

After the "sermon," a little talk on Christ and

Buddha and the many points they had in common, the simple services were done. Mrs. West, first on her feet, as an alert club-woman should be, in a clear, pleasantly-modulated voice thanked Sister Isabelle, in behalf of the audience, for the pleasure and the profit that were theirs. One naturally assumed that the "affair" had been held under the auspices of the Woman's Club. Mrs. West then undulated to Hope, sprayed her with a smile, and thanked her for the lovely music.

Mrs. West's conversational voice was pitched much lower than her club voice; her manner, too, was much less crisp.

"I suppose I am more interested in music than in any other art," said the lady, with an air suggesting multitudinous irons in the intellectual fire. "I have a son who is devoted to it."

Miss Winston surmised that the son alluded to was Mr. Arthur West; he was assuredly devoted to vocal music, and daily gave proofs of a strenuous allegiance. She was very glad, she remarked, that Mrs. West had enjoyed her small musical offering.

"I hope to hear you play again," the lady murmured, and receded as a wave.

"Was it not interesting!" exclaimed Madame Jes-

urin, when she and Hope at last set their faces toward home.

Hope assented. "But I do not understand why Mrs. West thanked Sister Isabelle."

"Oh, these new women!" cried the Countess. "They think they are running the universe."

"Still," said Hope, "it was for *us* she thanked the Sister—not for Buddha."

Madame laughed, and thought her young friend rather bright.

CHAPTER VII

THE BROAD WAY TO PARNASSUS

"I am much pleased by the examiner's report on your case," Doctor Erdmann said, when Miss Winston presented herself on Monday afternoon.

He read from the record: "Technic, good; rhythm, perfect; tone, good; interpretation, intelligent; remarks—symptoms of genius."

Miss Winston smiled. The diagnosis was most encouraging. If there were no heart complications she would likely get on famously.

Doctor Erdmann gave her a typewritten slip. "A schedule of your lessons," he said.

"All these!" She glanced down the long list. "I

had no idea there were so many branches of musical study."

"Yes-yes. The artist's course covers a great deal of ground, but under our system the student gets over this ground wonderfully fast. Not a moment is wasted; every tick of the clock means progress."

She examined the schedule curiously. "Are all the lessons fifteen minutes long?"

"All class lessons, except lectures, are a quarter-hour in length; one minute is allowed for changing classes. You will perceive the necessity for absolute promptness."

She could not fail to.

"Yes-yes. You will notice I have included vocal instruction: it will do no harm to try out your voice. There are in addition many lectures and recitals: these are free, and you may attend what you have time and taste for. Your first lesson, you will observe, is for four o'clock,—it is nearly that now,—in studio Number Eight-twenty-two."

She rose, and Doctor Erdmann accompanied her, as on her previous visit, to the outer door, pressing her hand at parting.

"Do you find your present lodgings satisfactory?" he inquired solicitously.

"In Atwood Street? Yes; I think I shall continue to like them."

"Yes-yes; I hope so. But Atwood Street is a great way from the conservatory; you may wish to live nearer. Should you decide to make a change, pray inform me. I have a list of extremely desirable homes for students."

She thanked him. It was kind to take so personal an interest in the conservatory's thousands of students.

"The library adjoins my office," he said. "You will find in it a large collection of books on music."

She drew her fingers away. "I am greatly obliged to you, Doctor Erdmann. Good afternoon."

As Hope left the elevator at the eighth octave, a gong sounded; then another, and another—a great banging of gongs, some on floors above and some below. With the echoes studio doors were flung open, and students poured into the corridor.

Mercy! she thought, was the building afire? No; classes were changing—that was all. The corridor emptied as rapidly as it filled. The Grindstone went on whirling.

Hope located studio No. 822, and opened the door —a full minute late.

Along one wall of the room ran a bench or table, on which a line of students was practising some sort of callisthenics. At a signal they rose on their toes, hands high and fingers arched, and at another signal pitched forward upon the bench.

"Something like kneading bread, only more violent," Hope said to herself.

Observing a new student, the teacher came forward and placed Hope at the end of the line.

"Do as the others are doing," she said.

Hope imitated as best she could, and at the first attempt came down so heavily that she thought all her fingers were broken. "Relax more," she was directed. She relaxed.

"This is to acquire volume of tone," the instructor informed her. "The table, you understand, is a piano. D'Albert, the Little Giant of the Keyboard, follows this plan, practising on a pianvil. . . . There, you are getting it better. Try to imagine yourself a wave, breaking on the beach."

"That is more poetical than bread-making," Hope reflected, cresting and combing with the other breakers. "We shall see some spray presently, if my hair keeps coming down."

Following this strenuous drill there were lighter

gymnastics for the fingers alone, and a most ingenious exercise for acquiring independence of hands.

This exercise was more difficult than it seemed. The reader who may have tried the foolish old trick of rubbing the stomach with one hand, round and round, and patting the top of the head with the other, probably never imagined it might be put to an admirable educational use. Pray imagine fifty students performing this drill, while a metronome ticks the tempo. What better preparation for the perfect practice of the gospel of Bach: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"? The exercise is cheerfully recommended to all piano students who have difficulty with cross-rhythm. When you can rub your stomach in common time while you pat your head in three-four, dual rhythm will have no further terrors for you.

When the gong sounded Hope consulted her schedule, and found she was due in No. 820; and as this studio was on the same octave, she was only half a minute late. She guessed it was her vocal exercise when she saw Arthur West in the double row of students. He remarked her at the same instant, and shifted his position to the end of his line, that she might stand beside him.

"What is it?" she whispered. "'Money Musk' or Virginia reel?"

"*Ah-h-h!*" he replied mysteriously and in the spirit of her query, "awfully jolly to have you for a partner. Didn't know you screeched."

"I don't," she confided. "I'm just having my voice 'tried out'—rendered, you know."

A Japanese parasol was placed in her hands, and she held it before her, as the others did, ready to open at a signal.

"You sing '*Ah,*'" the instructor advised the new student, "increasing the tone as you open the parasol. This produces a perfect crescendo. . . . One, two, three, *sing!*"

The parasols opened slowly and evenly to a chorused *Ah* that swelled from pianissimo to forte; at another command they closed, diminuendo. This exercise was repeated until the class was dismissed.

"Great method, eh?" said West very enthusiastically.

"Splendid!" Hope agreed.

"Are you down for the tongue and towel? That comes next."

"I have only one more lesson, and that is piano."

"I'll be through for the day myself in ten minutes.

Fine weather outside. If you don't object, Miss Winston, I suggest a walk down the avenue."

Miss Winston made no objection.

"My mother tells me she met you yesterday at a Hindoo revival, or something of that sort. She says you scramble divinely."

"Mrs. West spoke very kindly of my playing."

"Mother knows the real thing when she hears it. She composes, you know—songs; all the leading songbirds sing them."

"Oh, how interesting!" Miss Winston conceived a high opinion of Mrs. West as a composer.

Arthur laughed: "They can't help it, you know. Mother dedicates the songs to them."

His laugh was infectious; but neither of them intended disrespect to the stately Mrs. West.

"My next method must be about due," said Hope, referring to her schedule.

"In ten minutes, then," said Arthur, smiling.

She nodded, and left him ringing the elevator bell.

The lair of Professor Jan Van Wart, sometimes referred to as the Studio of the Soul, was on the skylight octave, and contained more furnishings than one sees in the usual studio. Besides the piano, there was a large wardrobe (beyond the door of which no stu-

The professor rose and paced slowly to and fro *Page 94*

dent eye had penetrated), an easy-chair, and a writing table littered with manuscript scores. The floor was rugged, and the walls were covered with portraits of musicians, the great ones being represented many times. There were at least twenty portraits of Liszt, showing the Abbé at all ages; for Professor Van Wart, as the Grindstone catalogue advised one, was Liszt's "favorite pupil." On the mantel were many curious relics of the Abbé. Most treasured were a cigarette stub which the master once tossed away without a thought of its value, a collar-button lost during an exciting lesson, and the pen with which the syrupy *Liebesträume* was written.

Hope loitered near the Studio of the Soul, waiting for the gong. When it sounded the door opened and a damsel emerged. She turned on the new student a pair of big brown eyes, uttered, in a tone of solemn warning, the one word "Beethoven," and glided toward the elevator. Looking after her, Hope thought: "How like a ghost she moves!"

The studio was in half-light, and Hope did not at once perceive Van Wart. She closed the door softly, and presently made out the professor, a roly-poly figure in the depths of the easy-chair. He was not bad-looking. To be sure, his high, straight forehead

was corrugated in a "frightful, frantic, fearful frown" worthy of the Lord High Executioner himself, and above this was flung back his wild unparted mane; but there were dimples in his chubby cheeks, and the lines around his mouth were persistently mirthful. He was staring fixedly at a large portrait of Beethoven above the mantel.

Hope coughed softly, and this failing to draw his attention she took seat on the piano stool and looked curiously about the studio. At last Van Wart turned his head and fixed his dreamy eyes on her.

"Play," he said, in a voice remote. Hope turned to the keyboard.

What should it be? . . . Beethoven, of course. The girl with the brown eyes had said the word, and Van Wart's absorption in the portrait showed the drift of his meditations. The very atmosphere of the studio was charged with Beethoven.

She poised her hands for the last movement of the "Moonlight Sonata", which had proved effective with Herr Notensatt; but suddenly reflecting that Van Wart's dreamy mood and the twilit studio were better matched by the first movement, she played that instead.

With the opening measures the professor rose and

paced slowly to and fro, one hand thrust in his waistcoat. His mane had tumbled down his brow, his big bow tie was in disorder, his upturned eyes rolled in a fine frenzy.

He stopped beside the piano. "Louder! Louder!" he commanded irritably.

"But it's marked pianissimo!" exclaimed Hope, dropping her hands, respect for authority submerged in surprise.

Van Wart struck his forehead with a clenched fist. "*Ach, Gott!* my deafness!"

"Oh, the poor man!" thought Hope. "I should have played the last movement."

Feeling it was useless to go on with the Adagio, she played the Presto, forte throughout.

"There!"—concluding with a thumping chord—"if you can't hear that you're hopeless."

Van Wart turned, with what sounded suspiciously like a chuckle, and depositing his pudgy self in the easy-chair, resumed his study of Beethoven's face. Mystified, and a trifle annoyed, Hope picked up her gloves and marched out of the studio.

Another damsel was in waiting.

"What is he to-day?" she whispered, her hand on the door-knob.

"Crazy," Hope replied briefly, and without pausing in her march. "Oh!"—suddenly recalling the exit of the girl with the brown eyes, and turning her head—"Beethoven!"

"Thanks," said the other, and passed in.

Evidently "Beethoven" was a countersign.

Arthur West tarried below. He was in high spirits, and Hope forgot her annoyance at sight of his smiling face.

"I've just heard of a splendid thing," he said, as they strolled down the boulevard. "A voice-rectifier and tone-cultivator, or something of that sort. Shaped like a wedge, and when you put it in your mouth it gives just the right opening of the teeth. When the mouth is in position you sing. Price fifty cents."

"How curious! I never dreamed that learning to sing was such a complicated matter."

"Oh, it's simple enough if you get hold of the right method. All luck, you know."

"What is the 'tongue and towel' you spoke about? Is that another method?"

"Why,"—Arthur launched enthusiastically into the exposition,—"the tongue is an unruly member, especially with young singers. It rises in the back of the mouth, and stiffens itself so it blocks the passage

of the tone. Now, this obstruction must be removed, you know."

Hope agreed that the unruly member should be expelled in some way, short of cutting it out.

"Some genius—I forget his name—adopted the simple expedient of seizing the tip of the tongue with the fingers encased in toweling, and drawing it forward until the throat is open. Then you screech."

"Simplicity itself."

"Some teachers claim that the best results are obtained by using a studio towel, imbued, as it were, with the spirit of true tone, and well trained."

Miss Winston thought it would be much nicer to have individual towels. She fancied, too, that after the towel had learned its owner's peculiarities it would serve him better than one which had the tribulations of many aspiring students on its mind.

"Mine has troubles of its own," said Arthur ruefully. "Did you have a good lesson?"

"No, indeed. The teacher was deaf as an adder. How absurd!"

"Deaf? Oh-h-h! Van Wart! Weren't you told about him?"

"Not a word."

The young man chuckled. "There's nothing the

matter with Van Wart's ears except their size and shape. This must be his Beethoven day. Sit mooning at a portrait of the old man?"

"Yes; and walked up and down the room like one possessed."

"That's it; that's the method. He communes with the spirit of the master."

"Indeed! And where do I come in?"

"Oh, *you* draw inspiration from the master through Van Wart; he radiates it; he's a medium. The audience is invited to step forward and see that the cabinet is empty."

Hope took half a minute to digest this interesting information. "Well . . . Beethoven must have been feeling pretty grumpy to-day. That's all the inspiration I got."

"I dare say." West laughed. "Better luck next time. I mean, you know, that every day isn't Beethoven day with Van Wart. Most of the students like his Chopin act best; though some prefer Wagner day, when he wears nothing but silk and velvet, and talks politics all through the lesson. But you want to watch out for him on Liszt days—though he doesn't mean anything."

"Why, how does he perform on Liszt days?"

Arthur gave her a quick side glance. Her eyes were innocently curious.

"Ask Flora Matheson," he replied.

Conversation halted; then Hope remarked: "Is Miss Matheson a student at our conservatory?"

"She studies vocal there, and piano with Mrs. Sudo. You'll have to get Miss Matheson to tell you about the Sudo method; it's over *my* head. Something about circles. . . . Hello, there's Church Gray ahead of us, looking in the art-store window. May I present him? Awfully good chap."

Hope murmured an assent, conscious of a heightened color.

Mr. Churchill Gray's acknowledgment of the introduction consisted of a repetition of the words "Miss Winston" and a slight inclination of the head. His eyes were less aloof.

"I'd have presented you Saturday night if Ma Keith hadn't pounced on you," West remarked.

"I recall seeing Miss Winston in the foyer," said Gray.

Hope's heart thumped. He, too, had remembered!

Gray glanced back to the shop window.

"What have you found now that's good?" asked Arthur.

"Nothing new—a picture of Brahms; an impression, a memory sketch, I believe. Very good copy."

"Oh, is that Brahms?" exclaimed Miss Winston, vastly interested.

"That's the man," said Gray.

Arthur took off his hat in mock reverence. "Good old Brahms!"

Hope stole a look at Gray's face, and noted that the mouth was singularly sweet and tenderly mirthful, though nuptialed to a serious chin.

"What is Brahms playing, do you suppose?" she asked.

"His D-minor Capriccio, it pleases me to think," Gray answered. "The left hand tops the right in that fashion."

"Curious-looking old chap," said West. "Built something like Van Wart."

"Oh!" expostulated Hope.

"A modern writer throws a light on Brahms's peculiar architecture," said Gray, with a smile. "In one breath, almost, he observes that Brahms was 'not knee-high to Beethoven,' yet 'his shoulders were broad enough to bear the imposing weight of Beethoven's mantle.' That would seem to account for his squattiness."

"The dachshund of composers," remarked Arthur irreverently.

"He has a beautiful face," said Hope, looking wistfully at the picture.

"Are you interested in Brahms, Miss Winston?"

Did she merely imagine it, or was there just the suggestion of a sneer in the inquiry?

"I know nothing about Brahms," she answered indifferently, and turned from the window.

Gray raised his hat, and they separated.

"Awfully brainy chap," said West, when he and Hope resumed their stroll.

"Yes?" she replied, without enthusiasm.

"'Way up in music, so Karl Geist says, and Geist knows all there is to know about it."

"Mr. Gray is a musician, then."

"He writes about music; he's the *Post's* critic. Knocks the musicians good and hard, and they pretend to like it."

"He looks as if he might write and say provoking things."

"Do you think so? Well, he's a good fellow, for all that. You'll fancy him."

"Perhaps so," said Hope impassively.

On the way home she bought a copy of the *Post*.

CHAPTER VIII

TOUCHING MATTERS OF MINOR IMPORTANCE

The week slipped: memorably fleet were the days. Time, laughing, tossed the hours from his glass, and swore the jest of life was excellent.

O Youth! Youth! . . . Alas, what is there new that may be said on the subject!

Youth is beloved of the gods. Youth is life's beautiful moment, a May morning, an eternal canticle. Youth is the golden prime, beautiful in its follies, supreme happiness in itself. Youth is all that sage has said and poet sung. And yet—

Would you, Five-and-Forty, who have crossed the divide and begun the descent into the mist-hidden valley of age—would you go back over the trail, for-

going one by one the memories of the ascent, and parting piece by piece with the gold of experience? Would the blown rose furl its petals and be a bud again?

Our Princess Hope, still in the sun-drenched vale of youth, ran each day a losing race with Phœbus. No real Princess, at home or abroad, ever had half so much to do and think about as she.

First, there was her music—piano practice morning and afternoon, and lessons and lectures at the Grindstone; these were restricted to three days in the week. Next in importance came her household duties, the not inconsiderable burden of which she faithfully discharged. Some time, too, she contrived to spare for adding to the attractiveness of her new home. The easy-chair looked better for a cretonne cover. A square of India print on the table brightened up the larger room. A photograph of Herr Herschel, "reverenced as a god," was shrined on the piano: only candles were wanting.

Thus far her evenings had been free, but these were short-houred as the days. Matched with Madame Jesurin's fleet tongue, Time ran his legs off, and confessed himself outclassed. Two nights of the week the Countess was engaged with language classes; and, left to herself, Hope read "With Rack and Wheel: A

Romance of the Holy Inquisition", by Stanley Arthur Jones—one of the six best-selling books of the hour. Madame lent her the book, with a rhapsody upon it.

Hope echoed the praises faintly. Not that "With Rack and Wheel" fell short of the standards of historical romance; on the contrary, it reeked with approved merits; but the world which Hope inhabited appeared to her more wonderful than the world of Stanley Arthur Jones's fancy. The dancing of his puppets entertained; at best they could not seem so real to her as to the gentleman who pulled the strings.

As for her music, no progress was yet perceivable. By diligent hammering at Bach and Czerny she recovered the ground lost by three days of idleness, but she did not seem to get over the keys so readily as before. Perhaps she practised incorrectly the conservatory callisthenics.

There could be, of course, no criticism of the Grindstone's methods; these were founded on scientific principles, and no more admitted of criticism than the law of gravity.

As we have seen, she was drilled in tone volume, and in manual and digital independence. She received instruction in staccato—compelled by an electrically-heated metallic keyboard; so hot were the keys that the

fingers touched them an infinitesimal part of a second; a staccato of rare crispness was the result. A pianissimo so fine that "nothing lived 'twixt it and silence," was obtained by holding down the pedal while the last struck chord expired, and then pretending to strike the chord again—an effect similar to that which violinists produce by detaching the bow from the strings and drawing it through the air. For the acquisition of the "velvet touch," plush-faced keyboards were employed, and it became second nature to touch the keys caressingly. (No doubt Monsieur Paderewski and other pianists, whose "beautiful touch" so arouses our enthusiasm, practise daily on a velvet keyboard.) She learned to open a parasol and sing *Ah* crescendo. She imbibed the spirit of Beethoven through that most sensitive of mediums, Professor Jan Van Wart. She learned something of musical analysis and history; she had nine minutes of ear-training, and as many more of sight-reading and ensemble playing; she picked up a few facts in harmony, a study which interested her immediately, and into which she was impatient to go deeper. The week brought, also, a valuable lesson in stage presence: she was shown how to approach a piano, how to bow, how to leave the stage, how to accept and bear off floral offerings. On Friday

came a remarkable lecture by Doctor Emil Dudelsack, who occupied the chair of "How to Listen to Music." Doctor Dudelsack discoursed of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel,* the Prelude to which was on the programme for the second Symphony concert.

"Hark!" he said, with bated breath. "Is that flimmering on the violins the stealthy footfall of some ravening creature of the wild? No; 'tis but the night wind moaning through rustling leaves, a threnody of poignant despair not untinged with irony. . . ."

Murmurous appreciation circled the class-room as Dudelsack paused a moment, intoxicated by the exuberance of his own virtuosity. "Isn't that perfectly sweet!" passed from lip to lip. The Doctor ran his fingers through his pompadour and resumed:

"Another rustling on the violins betokens the coming day. The odoriferous breeze, incense of nature's glorious cathedral, floats dewily through the forest aisles. Phaethon is harnessing the horses to the Chariot of the Sun. The music increases in brightness. A trumpet call! Phaethon is off!—through the purple portals of the east and down the rose-strewn pathway of the Zodiac. Listen! The flute and oboe passage is the dance of nymphs and naiads. The forest glows with sunlight. . . ."

Thus, in flowing periods, Dudelsack expressed his soul.

"If Madame Jesurin were only here!" said Hope. "Madame would *love* the Doctor. . . ."

Twice during the week Miss Winston was accorded the privilege of a heart-to-heart talk with the president of the Colossus. On both occasions he was most gracious, sympathetically inquiring, solicitous for her musical and physical welfare. Was she quite satisfied with the disposition of her hours at the conservatory? If not, a rearrangement was possible. Was she getting along nicely with her studies? A little early to say?—"yes-yes." She must keep him advised of her progress, nor hesitate to acquaint him of any obstruction to the free expression of her soul. "Come in at any time," he said. "I like to see as much of the students as possible." ("Especially if they are feminine and physically attractive," his eyes added.)

Mr. Arthur West also contrived to see Miss Winston on the days she visited the conservatory; he seemed to spend a great deal of his time there. Hope attached no significance to his original scrutiny of her lesson schedule. She recalled Mrs. West's statement that Arthur was devoted to music: that was obvious.

One day she stopped before the art-shop window

for a second look at the picture of Brahms; a great desire to possess it came over her. And then her brow puckered at the recollection of Churchill Gray's inquiry: "Are you interested in Brahms, Miss Winston?" Was he mocking her? She wished she knew; if he were, she would be angry with him. Did he imagine that nobody except himself could be interested in Brahms?

She took courage to ask the price of the sketch, and found, as she feared, that it was beyond her means. If Mr. Gray was so tremendously interested in Brahms why did he not buy the picture and bear the treasure home in triumph, as she would do if she did not have to count her pennies? Perhaps he already had a copy.

She turned her steps toward a music store. If the master's portrait was beyond her reach, she might at least purchase some of his compositions. Alas, these proved unexpectedly high in price.

"All Brahms music is dear," the clerk informed her. "Copyrighted, you know."

The First and Second Rhapsodies (they came together) cost a dollar; but the temptation was not to be resisted.

"I shall have to economize at the butcher's," she reflected as she left the store and hastened to Atwood

Street to act on the familiar suggestion: "Take this home and try it over on your piano."

The Second Rhapsody, which Mrs. Maybury had played for her, was not so difficult as the first; and it was a joy merely to read the grim harmonic outlines. She set herself to the task of learning Number Two.

With her domestic environment Miss Winston was well content, despite its distance from the conservatory. Mrs. Grady continued sympathetically kind; and after the first shock of surprise she accepted John Grady. That good man's idea of after-dinner comfort was to remove his shoes and deposit his feet in one kitchen chair while he sat in another and read the *Evening Telegraph.*

The only other male about the house was Patrick, the fetcher of coals. He, too, was a man of few words, even when "under the influence"; scrupulously polite, anxious to please. When Saturday came, and Hope paid him his twenty-five cents, he removed his nondescript cap and made her a bow which would have passed muster before any Princess.

That evening Hope attended, unaccompanied, the second Symphony concert.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCE AND THE GOOSE

Wishing to make certain of a seat, Hope arrived in Music Hall full fifteen minutes before the concert began. Very few people were on hand, nor did the gallery fill rapidly as the minutes passed; down stairs it was no better. The hall was a great barn, to be sure, yet opening night had seen it crowded.

She looked over the programme notes. Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, first on the list, had inspired Dudelsack to flights of poesy seldom soared to; while the notes to *Hänsel und Gretel,* as we already know from the sample, were "perfectly sweet."

Interesting also were the advertisements in the programme book. Surprisingly large was the number of

musical institutions in the city. Some of these were conservatories, some were colleges, seminaries, schools. This from the prospectus of a "musical seminary":

"One of the largest, most thorough and systematic institutions in America. SCHOOL OF RAPID PROGRESS. Originators of the ONLY perfect method of musical instruction. NO DRUDGERY. LIKE A TRIP TO FAIRYLAND. Beautiful and charming melodies from the start. Even the OLD, who have been prevented studying music in youth, can now acquire the knowledge so long withheld from them. Twenty lessons enable young or old to perform on piano, banjo, mandolin or guitar that which requires years by the old method. SURPRISE FRIENDS. Thousands of testimonials. Open evenings. Catalogue free."

A musical mail-order house engaged to teach the art by correspondence. Another institution promised excellent results from absent treatment. A voice culturist, whose photograph suggested the gentlemanly advance agent for a patent wringer, informed the world, regardless of syntax, that he gave "careful attention to instruct the pupil in deep breathing, so as to open the throat, so as the tone comes forward to their proper placement in the tone chamber." Two or three rivals of Doctor Dudelsack offered to pilot the tenderfoot through the bogs of Beethoven, the desert of

Grieg, the dark tarn of Chopin, the misty mid-region of Brahms. One lady, appreciating that we live in a concentrated and predigested age, was prepared to accompany a party voyaging to Bayreuth, and to explain on the way over what Richard Wagner was driving at. "Artists" available for "private recitals or salon musicales," and pundits desirous to discourse to women's clubs, were represented by cards. The manufacturers of the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Piano-Player called the attention of the "tired professional or business man" to "a relaxation that means greater force and energy the next day"; this marvelous invention was under the instantaneous control of the most fatigued dentist or coal merchant, who might "vary the touch from a soft, velvety legato to a blow so powerful that it was never exceeded by a Liszt or Rubenstein."

Hope turned her attention to the people about her. A middle-aged man with pallid side-whiskers was reading a country newspaper. A kindly-faced priest talked of Bach to three young men who listened alertly. A pair of lovers munched caramels and looked sweeter things. A serious-featured young man, a violinist (his fiddle-box was between his knees), discoursed reminiscently of Berlin to his companion. He had played, he

remarked casually, under the baton of Brahms. Hope leaned forward, wishing to hear more; but the stage bell rang, the orchestral units swarmed in, and a rustling of programmes signified a general curiosity touching the first number: just as a man who, a moment previously, has ascertained that it is six o'clock, pulls out his watch again if asked the time.

Regarding the emotions of Miss Winston during the progress of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony her biographer deems it sufficient to depose that she listened reverently, and was spiritually exalted. He essays no analysis of her soul processes, or Beethoven's, for two reasons: first, to invite comparison with Doctor Dudelsack would be disastrous; second, he is unfortunately not of those who are able to "see things" in music. For pictures he is compelled to go to art galleries; for philosophical ideas he is restricted to books and spoken words; and he misses utterly that welter of the emotions which music produces, with equal facility, in the breasts of the happy Hottentot and the "music-lover" of civilization. He feels his limitations keenly; and honesty compels the avowal that the subject of this biography was no less deficient in capacity for "seeing things": their mutual poverty of imagination is one of many "bonds invisible." This

confession made, the present writer retires discreetly, leaving Dudelsack in undisputed possession of the field, and the biography proceeds.

As Herr Herschel raised his baton for the Bach suite, second on the programme, Churchill Gray entered the gallery, tiptoed down the aisle, and took an end chair. He sat with arms folded, head tilted forward and to one side, blissfully unconscious that he divided with Johann Sebastian Bach the attention of a young woman three rows behind him. Moments there were when Bach seemed utterly routed, but he triumphed in the end; still, there was no saying how he would fare in a second encounter.

When the audience began to disperse for the intermission that followed, Gray, returning up the aisle, observed Miss Winston, paused, and put a hand on the back of the vacant chair beside her.

"Did you intend a promenade?" he inquired.

She murmured a negative, and he sat down, remarking: "Herschel leaves nothing to be desired when he reads the old masters."

She expressed satisfaction with everything that Herr Herschel did; she was not wise enough to criticize.

"Or ignorant enough?" he suggested.

"If only ignorance were required I should make a famous critic."

"It has made many a one. Ignorance with assurance is invincible."

She drew his attention to the man with the pallid side-whiskers. "He has been reading that newspaper ever since he sat down. What does he come here for?"

"Why, it's warm and bright, and more private than a club."

"Do you suppose he hears the music?"

"Evidently it doesn't annoy him."

"Nor that couple,"—indicating the caramel-munchers.

" 'If music be the food of love, play on.' "

"There are lots of interesting faces here," said Hope. "You don't ascend to the hurricane deck as a rule, do you?"

"No. I came up to-night for the Bach; I have a notion it is heard better from here. My seats on the lower floor are a trifle too far forward."

"It must be pleasanter down stairs, on the whole."

"The chairs are more comfortable, and it is quieter: contrary to tradition, the wealthy patrons make less noise when the orchestra is playing than the so-called music-lovers up here. But the lights in the parquet

are more trying to the eyes, and the feminine contingent more highly scented—more suggestive of drug-store blotters."

"I hope the ushers down stairs don't wear such squeaky shoes and tramp about so. It is difficult to keep one's mind on the music, there is such a clatter."

"Yes; it is difficult. There are many distractions in a public hall; so few people have any consideration for the rights of others; though I surmise that the nervous pace at which we all live would preclude concentration in the most favorable conditions. I reason from my own experience: I enjoy music properly only on a few rare occasions—when my nervous energy is not spent for the day, or when there has been space for recuperation. And if I, to whom music is more than a means of entertainment, find myself at times unable to endure it, why quarrel with the folks who wish merely to have their ears tickled?"

"But you do quarrel with them—in the *Post*."

"Oh!" He shrugged. "On general principles."

"Well, *my* nerves are good; and I feel I could listen to all the music in the world."

Gray smiled indulgently at her enthusiasm. "I thought so once myself," he said. "I still think so—when I come out of the woods in the fall, with a new

lease of nerve life and my mental affairs set in order; but in two or three months I begin to grow restless, until, at the fag end of the season, I can cut a concert without a pang."

He spoke slowly, and his voice was the most musical she had ever heard. His eyes, too, were remarkably attractive, and she found herself looking steadily into them without confusion.

They chatted the intermission away, and Gray kept his seat beside her till the concert's end. When they descended to the lower floor he observed that she was not joined by friend or acquaintance, and asked the pleasure of accompanying her home. She discouraged the idea; she lived such a great distance off. Pressed for details, she mentioned street and number.

"We take the same trolley," he smiled. "Therefore, unless objection be made—"

Squeezed in a corner of a crowded street-car, after ten minutes of hanging to straps, conversation was resumed. Miss Winston remarked on the size of the audience attending the concert. Were light houses the rule or the exception?

"Perhaps half of the series are well attended," said Gray. "It takes a great many people to fill Music Hall. Still, there is no excuse for vacant seats in the

gallery. There are enough music students in town to fill the house twice over."

Hope expressed a mild surprise that music students should be indifferent to the privilege of hearing the Symphony Orchestra.

"If they were really students, conditions might be otherwise," Gray replied; "but the average student, so called, cares little about music, and contrives to learn even less. The schools do not, it is true, advise against attending the Herschel concerts; but on the other hand, they do not say, 'Attend them religiously: they will teach you more than we can.' "

"In another way."

"In an honester way. . . . But the advice if given would be wasted. The student's single ambition is to possess a diploma, with which to set up in the provinces as a teacher. A teacher of music!" Ineffable contempt informed the words. "She ought to be back on the farm, helping her mother with the housework. . . . Oh, I beg your pardon!"

Hope's face was suddenly scarlet, her under lip quivering.

"It was thoughtless of me," he said. "I might have guessed—"

She caught him up swiftly.

"Yes; you might have guessed. Anybody can see I am from the provinces."

"I did not mean that, Miss Winston," he replied earnestly.

"Nevertheless, I *am* from the provinces, and I *should* be at home, helping my mother with the housework."

"I refuse to acquiesce."

"Privately you do."

He was silent.

"I can not speak for the average student," said Hope, her composure recovered; "but if *she* is as poor as I am, she has very little money to spend on concert tickets. Light purses may account for the vacant seats in Music Hall, Mr. Gray."

"I confess I overlooked that point," said Gray contritely. "It is so long since I *bought* a concert ticket, I quite forgot that money was asked for them."

She had been looking straight before her, but at this she turned on him a coolly critical glance, sweeping downward from opera hat to patent leathers. He bore it with a sardonic smile. . . .

Hope touched the conductor's arm: "Atwood Street, please." And to Gray: "I thank you for your company."

"Privately you do not," he returned good-humoredly.

They debarked together.

"You have come a long way past your own street-corner, have you not?" said Hope.

"A few squares."

"Twenty, at a guess."

"I refuse to count them."

"There comes a car—and I can see my doorway from here."

"I shall walk home. . . . But not until you have forgiven my thoughtless speech."

"You shall not be delayed. Truth does not need forgiveness, Mr. Gray. You simply did not know that I was of the presumptuous ones."

"I am sure you are not."

"But I am." They paused before No. 69. "I am all you suspect. I shall go back to the provinces with my diploma, tied with a pretty pink ribbon, and set up as a teacher of music. A teacher of music!"—she sought to reproduce his scornful accents. "I shall charge fifty cents an hour for adults, and twenty-five cents for children."

He did not smile with her. He suspected that the tears were not far away.

"Do me the justice to remember," he said, "that I spoke of the average student; and permit me to think of you as something better."

"You will not think of me at all."

"Is that a command?"

"No; a prophecy. Good night, Mr. Gray."

"Good night."

The door closed after her, and he turned away, saying: "Another goose for the charlatans to pluck." Then, obeying a sudden impulse, he retraced his steps, and noted down the goose's house-number.

"I owe something for cutting her up so," he remarked to the street-lamp; and with a final glance at the house, and a shrug of his shoulders, he went his way.

CHAPTER X

A CLATTER OF MUSICAL SHOP; WITH SOME RULES FOR SUCCEEDING IN LITERATURE

In the catalogue of human passions, the desire to get something for nothing deserves a line in black-face. It is universal as love and hatred, strong as envy. Nothing so worthless but it is desired, only let it be gratis.

The concerts in the recital hall of the Colossus Conservatory of Music, performed by students and members of the faculty, were far from being worthless, but had they been utterly without merit and reason for existence, they would have drawn; for they were without price, to students and the public, and always the hall was crowded.

Artistically these concerts left much—on occasion everything—to be desired. They were of value chiefly to the students, who through them were made aware of the existence of good music, however little real interest in it they might afterward exhibit.

Thus to-night the programme is given over wholly to Mozart, of whose music Hope Winston has yet to hear the first note.

As she was casting about for a seat in the rapidly-filling hall, Miss Winston was sighted by Flora Matheson, and invited to make one of a merry group whose other units were Arthur West, Karl Geist, and Stanley Arthur Jones.

The author of "With Rack and Wheel" was a fine-looking chap, very tall, with silky brown mustache and curly hair to match it. He was telling Miss Matheson, in whom he evidenced a more than casual interest, that his favorite composition, in all music, was Weber's "Invitation to the Dance."

"Though peradventure," he added, "Professor Geist would visit disapproval on my choice, in very sooth."

Mr. Jones on occasion relapsed into the archaic. For years he had breathed the atmosphere of historical romance, and was now assisting to oxygenate it;

so that at times, when the whim took him, his language and his manner were of an elder day. He carried it off well, as he had all the qualifications of a hero of romance, and if occasion should arise he was prepared to act the part; for no Gentleman of France was more chivalrous, or had a keener eye for a damsel in distress. Unfortunately, such female distress as came to Mr. Jones's notice was of a minor sort, calling for relief no more heroic than you or I could provide. Jones wore cloak and sword; but, in deference to modern convention, the cloak was an Inverness coat, and the sword was concealed in his cane. He would, I am sure, give an excellent account of himself in an ambuscade (known to our vulgar age as a "hold-up"); but he went unmolested by highwaymen, despite the fact that he exposed himself constantly. Certain thoroughfares of ill repute, avoided after nightfall by discreet ones, Jones threaded with a challenging step, prepared to cry "Have at you!" and "Gadzooks!" and other terror-breeding phrases. Many a prowling rascal escaped, by the mere luck of being elsewhere, a sword-thrust in his chest; for our hero was cunning at fence (the favorite pupil of Signor Rapiero), and intrepid as D'Artagnan.

To his remark Miss Matheson replied: "All music

looks alike to Professor Geist. He has no favorite composition."

Mr. Jones declined to credit such catholicity. He ventured the hazard of a box of chocolates that, were all music to be swept away, Professor Geist would plead for the retention of at least one opus.

Miss Matheson leaned over to Geist. "Mr. Jones wishes to know whether you have a favorite composition."

"Certainly," he answered quickly: "Galuppi's Toccata in B-sharp—the one he used to play to Browning."

The author, whose acquaintance with Browning was slight, smiled. "You have lost, Miss Matheson; but in the intoxication of my triumph I forgive you the sweet debt."

The chatter in the hall decreased. A violinist, "tuning up," was comparing his A with that of the piano.

"How much expression he puts in that A!" remarked Geist. And turning to a young pianist behind him: "That's the A *you* play, Leo."

Miss Winston laughed merrily, and Geist, who sat beside her, rewarded her quick appreciation with a comical grimace.

She sought to reconcile his boy-out-of-school man-

ner with his fame as violinist and teacher of musical theory. He had been described to her in a phrase: "Karl Geist is not a musician, he is music." Possibly that explained his manner. Music at times is unaffectedly merry; at other times 'tis melancholy, thoughtful, grave, tragic: Professor Geist had moods, perhaps, to correspond.

The concert began: "Mozart, Sonata for Piano and Violin, A-major." Geist gave close ear to it, nodding approval now and then. Naturally Miss Winston was less interested in the violinist than in the young woman at the piano, who, in her judgment, was playing uncommonly well. A reference to the programme showed her name to be Rhoda Weathers.

"One of the most beautiful of the sonatas," Geist observed, after the Allegro. "It is so simple that an artist is required to play it."

"Miss Weathers plays well," ventured Hope.

"Yes; *she* is the artist—or will be." The accented pronoun testified his opinion of the violinist, one of the Grindstone's staff.

Rhoda Weathers was a large young woman, with strong features and an unusually dark complexion. For one so inexperienced, she exhibited remarkable composure, both in her playing and her manner.

When she rose to acknowledge, unsmilingly, the audience's approbation, Hope recognized the brown-eyed girl who had given her the countersign, "Beethoven," at the door of the Studio of the Soul.

A second member of the faculty, Mr. Victor Mabbitt, a young man with a close-cropped beard, who looked like a prosperous physician, performed a C-major Fantasia and Sonata. He played carelessly, and embroidered the concluding chord with a ridiculous little trill of his own invention; after which gibe at Mozart he bowed curtly and strolled off the stage.

Geist laughed: "Scrambled eggs, after teaching all day."

"I say," this from Arthur West in a stage whisper, "Mabbitt's got tired expressing his soul, hasn't he?"

"Long since," said Geist. "He is now expressing his studio rent."

After Mozart was completely done for, Mr. West invited the congenial little company to supper. Miss Winston, for her part, demurred; and West, who had contrived the supper as a pretext for enjoying her society, denied him during the concert, looked his disappointment. Miss Matheson came to his rescue.

"I have something special to communicate to you, Miss Winston," she said. "Do come with us."

Hope, in her hesitation, looked at Geist, who for the first time was eying her attentively.

"Better come along, Miss Winston," he urged. "Miss Matheson's special communications are usually interesting."

"'Twould augment our pleasure greatly," murmured Mr. Jones.

Thus pleasantly beset, Miss Winston yielded.

"And find Rhoda, Arthur, before she gets away," Miss Matheson enjoined. "You have never met Rhoda Weathers, have you, Mr. Jones?"

The author expressed his regret archaically.

"She is Professor Geist's favorite pupil," said Flora. "He says she will be a great artist some day."

"Ah, indeed," murmured Mr. Jones, twisting his mustache. "I would I might hear her play that Galuppi piece. Favorite pupil, favorite composition—a feast, truly."

"Rhoda and I come from the same city—Cleveland," Miss Matheson remarked to Hope. "We have a little flat not far from here, with a housekeeper to look after us. You must come and take tea with us some afternoon."

Mr. West returned with the information that Miss Weathers had vanished immediately after her concert

number. Hope observed a troubled expression pass over Flora's face.

"Suppose we go to the Palm Garden," Arthur suggested, and, the others agreeing, the quintette repaired to a neighboring hotel, where Miss Winston looked in wonder on a new world, dazzling in its magnificence. The café was one approved by society, which flocked thither after theater and concert.

Being early on the scene, West selected a desirable table, and invited a vote of confidence in his ability to order a supper. While this was under humorous discussion Victor Mabbitt drifted in, and was pressed to make one of the party.

"I hear, Mr. Mabbitt," said Flora, "that you are going to give a concert devoted exclusively to the compositions of that new man—what's his name?—Hummel."

"Yes," said Geist; "he is going to marry Hummel's daughter."

"He has none," returned Mabbitt, joining in the laugh.

"Ah, you have inquired!" cried Geist, and the laugh circled again.

The clatter of musical shop continued through the supper, which was voted as successful an enterprise as

Mr. West had ever engineered. The gentlemen then lighted cigarettes, and the conversation turned on literature—fiction—of which trade a distinguished representative was present. Stanley Arthur Jones held forth on the essentials of the successful novel, meaning the novel which makes a wide appeal, selling its tens of thousands.

"*Imprimis,* lords and ladies," he declared, smiling around the circle, "a plenitude of action should inform the tale; and this brisk movement the preluding chapter right fairly should bespeak. Incident must never lack. An the tale do not develop incident a-plenty, the writer's wit must devise it; therein lies the art on't."

"Something doing all the time; that's the stuff," chimed Mabbitt. The author's gesture of assent obeyed "the oracular mind that made his features glow."

"Again, the tale, to be of a wide appeal, should harbor naught of gloom or melancholy. Nay, an you except death and hurt in battle or duello, the which may not be shunned, all else must be of a bright cheerful pattern. Life is strewn with trials and harrowing details: from these we seek surcease, and literature happily affords it."

"By literature, I take it you mean romance," Geist remarked, reaching for Arthur's cigarette case.

"Romance, fiction, literature—what you will," Mr. Jones responded airily. "I speak of books that make a wide appeal." Geist nodded, and the author pursued:

"The tale being sped, the conclusion of the matter should, nay must be happy: a duetto for the lovers, the scene preferably an exterior, with a chime of wedding bells heard distantly. The novelist mindful of these simple rules meets his readers half-way: an his tale be a good one he shall have scant reason to complain."

"But if one is not a natural-born story-teller, like you, Mr. Jones, rules will not help one much, will they?" The inquiry was Miss Matheson's.

"The whole matter, my lady, comes to this, as soothly has been said me by a critic of letters: A man sits down with quill and inkhorn, and covers divers sheets of fair white paper; when his travail is done we may know if the good Lord purposed him to be a novelist."

Mr. Jones's sequent smile of complacence imported that, so far as his own case was concerned, the intention of the good Lord was manifest.

"How queerly he talks!" Hope remarked aside to West.

"Like a book," said Arthur. "But he doesn't fly high all the time. Very often he comes down to earth, and is as simple and unaffected as you or I."

"His books are very successful, I am told."

"Oh, Jones has hit off the proper method, all right. His first novel cleaned up thirty thousand dollars, or something of that sort. But prosperity hasn't spoiled him. He's one of the nicest chaps I know."

The minutes sped unnoted by Hope, whose radiant face expressed her enjoyment of an experience novel and exciting. Not till she heard a woman at a near-by table exclaim that it was almost one o'clock, was she recalled to thoughts of Atwood Street. West, whose eyes fed upon her face, observed the sudden expression of blank dismay that crossed it, and heard her whisper to Miss Matheson: "What *shall* I do? I have missed the last car."

"That's all right," he assured her in a cheerful undertone. "I'll call a carriage."

"Oh, no; please do not!" she objected hastily.

"But really, you know, Miss Winston—"

"Let me assume the responsibility, since the fault is mine," Miss Matheson interposed serenely. "We were

having such a good time, I never thought of the clock."

Hope, much distressed, was mentally calculating the probable cost of a carriage to distant Atwood Street.

"Would it be possible for you to spend the night with me?" asked Flora. "There is plenty of room," she added, as Hope hesitated. "Besides, that special communication is still to be communicated."

No alternative suggesting itself, Hope acquiesced. The ladies were escorted grandly to a cab by that impeccable cavalier, Stanley Arthur Jones, who then departed in another cab with Arthur West. Geist and Mabbitt walked away together, discussing the comparative insignificance of music as a means to affluence when compared with the sister art of literature.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH TWO MAIDS LET DOWN THEIR HAIR

"These initial essays which we have prefixed to the historical matter contained in every book, we have determined to be essentially necessary to this kind of writing, of which we have set ourselves at the head." Thus Henry Fielding, in his immortal biography of Tom Jones.

Alas, dear Shade, that laws however wise, and fashions however excellent, must change. Were not invocations out of date, the biographer of Princess Hope would be tempted to try his hand at one, as prelude to this chapter. For he can call spirits from the vasty deep; as witness:

Come, Reverence! Do thou accompany me whilst

with hesitant step I pass the door to "mysteries which profane eyes never beheld." Thou knowest, Reverence, what charter, large as is the wind, the novelist enjoys: thou knowest, too, how oft he hath abused his liberty, lacking thy companionship; how, Asmodeus-wise, he hath ravaged privacy, and pitilessly hath exposed his heroine to chaste and ribald gaze alike, capering in her chamber most outrageously. Since, then, I must set foot in virgin's sanctuary, do thou, sweet Reverence, take me by the hand and guide me to the chamber's deepest shadow. Bid me to be mindful of my privilege, that thence I may depart with unflushed cheeks and level gaze.

And thou, Discretion, do thou go with me also; for, after Reverence, I have need of thee. And say not, "We should have earlier come," or "Delay yet an hour." For know, Discretion, that we may not tarry, but must enter now, since matter pertinent to our history is going forward.

And thou, Good Taste, sister to Discretion, without whose bland admonishments so many are betrayed to grievous errors and offenses, do thou, too, follow in. For what is Reverence without thee, or what Discretion?

"*But will they come when you do call for them?*"

The living-room is lighted by an open wood-fire, burning lazily. Its gleams play on walls and ceiling, and dimly body forth the apartment's furnishings—piano, bookshelves, rugs and pictures. In a far corner is a divan, on which a bed has been prepared against the slumbers of an unexpected guest.

Two maids in dishabille are seated on a tiger's skin before the fire, presenting, in the flashes of its poor lightning, a charming picture, whose lovely lines are tantalizingly obscured and broken by the impish, dancing shadows.

When maidens twain unloop their hair and ply the comb in company, a certain degree of intimacy is implied; for when the locks are down secrets are out; with the shaking free of tresses come down the barriers of reserve, and confidences arrow thick and fast. Intimacy is implied; but intimacy does not always wait on years' or even months' acquaintance: it may be, it frequently is, a matter of first sight, like love. These mushroom intimacies are common among women, blessed with intuitions: lacking them, man keeps his guard up, made wary by experience.

When the gold tresses and the brown were dropped, Miss Matheson unfolded her "special communication."

"Mrs. Addison West is to give a musicale, to introduce Marjorie Dodd, a singing friend from Buffalo. I am to help Mrs. West receive, as I very often do, and she would like to have you assist at the refreshment table. You will receive her more formal invitation to the musicale to-morrow."

"Mercy! how could I?" Hope exclaimed. "I have nothing to wear."

"Spoken like a true daughter of Eve, and as usual the objection is trivial. It is not to be a dress affair, though, of course, nothing can prevent some women from putting on full regalia. Any simple gown will do; some clinging black stuff, as the novelists say."

"Mrs. West is very kind; but why should she ask *me* to her house?"

"For two reasons: one, pretty girls are valuable as decorations; two, Mr. Arthur West probably put his mother up to it. Arthur admires you exceedingly, as of course you don't know, and is prepared to lose his wits over you with the slightest encouragement, or without it."

"Oh, Miss Matheson!"

"Please anticipate our better acquaintance and call me Flora. Don't you know there are some people you seem to have known a long, long time?"

"Yes," agreed Hope, recalling a tall, slender young man, and then resolutely excluding him from her thoughts.

"I should not have betrayed Arthur's flutters, for he is just the nicest boy. Besides, it is wrong to make light of a hopeless passion. But seriously," Flora dropped the comb in her lap, "I advise you to accept Mrs. West's invitation, if you can. You will meet a lot of the musical set, and a good many of them are worth knowing. They all go to Mrs. West's because she has good things to eat, and Pa West's cigars and whisky are like Cæsar's wife, and a good deal jollier."

"I suppose I *might* manage," said Hope, reflectively. (Her slender means included a sum of money for a new gown, Mother Winston having suggested that it be fashioned in the city, rather than in Swiftwater.) "What should I have to do at the musicale?"

"Oh, just assume a pleasant expression and hand out coffee and salad to hungry artists and music-lovers. That won't come till eleven o'clock or so; Marjorie Dodd has to sing first, and there will be other music. I have the hardest stunt, going around newspaper offices to-morrow, trying to persuade the critics that this is a musical affair, not a social function. I expect an awful wrestle with Churchill Gray."

"He will say something unpleasant, no doubt," observed Hope, her wounds still smarting.

"Oh, no; he'll just grin in the most aggravating manner and remark: 'You will find the society editor over in that corner, Miss Matheson.' "

"Then he'll *say* it unpleasantly, and you will feel that you *hate* him."

"Nonsense! Try to hate Churchill Gray, and see how you come out: I've tried it." Her voice was reminiscent of defeat. "But I shall be brave in Minerva West's cause; if necessary I'll resort to tears. Suppose you make the rounds with me; the critics can't resist *two* beautiful damsels."

"Excepting Mr. Gray."

"What makes you think *he* would hold out?" asked Flora curiously. "Do you know him?"

"I have met him. He impressed me as being rather unmanageable; a little opinionated—don't you think?"

"He's as stubborn as a mule, and just as easy to manage; but he's the loveliest man in the world. Don't you think he's *beautiful?*"

"He is very good-looking," Hope answered cautiously.

"Would you say a Greek god was good-looking?"

"I never saw one."

"There is a head in the Art Museum that is just like Churchill's."

Recalling Madame Jesurin's exclamation, "I love Greek gods!" Hope shook her hair over her face to hide a smile.

"There is a good deal of the marble about Mr. Gray, I fancy," she said. "I never met anybody quite so cool."

"Oh, that's just his *repose;* I wish I had some of it. But don't imagine that Churchill Gray is a cold proposition. Set fire to him and he'll burn like a varnish factory."

Hope laughed outright, and an interval of silence followed, during which both maids plied their brushes industriously. Then Hope inquired:

"Doesn't Mr. Gray write on other subjects besides music? I picked out one or two things in the *Post* that sounded like him."

"Oh, dear, yes; editorials, book reviews, and I don't know what else. It's a shame the way they make him work."

"He must get a very large salary."

"Just about enough to keep Arthur West in cigarettes," Flora replied resentfully. "No; Churchill is poor. It's his own fault."

"Poor Mr. Gray!" Hope thought. "That is why he didn't buy that picture of Brahms."

"I shouldn't say his own *fault*, but his own *choice*," Flora went on. "Poor boy . . ." She broke off. "I ought not to speak of it; he would be angry if he knew."

"Then don't—dear." Hope leaned over and pressed Flora's hand.

"No; I will tell you a fairy story instead," said Flora, brightening. "Once upon a time there was a Prince. His parents were well-to-do, as princes' parents ought to be; and when he was young—he isn't old yet—they sent him out to see the world. He traveled several years, and lived much in the capitals of Europe, devoting himself to music and the other arts. Music was his favorite, and he heard and studied the things worth while, and came to know the great men personally, forming friendships with many of them.

"When his father died, and he returned to his native city, the Prince cast his eye upon a certain Damozel, a daughter of affluence. Her hair was light and curly, giving thereby the impression of abundance; her eyes were blue, her eyebrows finely arched, showing a trivial character; complexion good, chin slightly pointed."

Flora turned her face from the firelight, but Hope saw that it was serious and kind.

"The Damozel interested the Prince, though she had little to recommend her. She was assuredly not an intellectual heavy-weight, though she had, and has, a clever way of appearing intelligent by knowing the last word on a topic, if not the first, and not attempting to swim when the water gets too deep. But she was pictorial; and next to music the Prince was fond of pictures. To this particular picture he gave a great deal of attention, and people said—but you know what people say.

"Things went wrong. The Damozel's parents being also dead, the estate was divided between son and daughter. The boy, a visionary youth, with schemes too big for his head, involved his friend, the Prince, in a reckless business venture, and their combined fortune was swept away. The Damozel wished to repair the disaster to the Prince, and offered him her patrimony. He refused it (he is frightfully proud), but oh, so sweetly and tenderly that the Damozel wept her eyes out; for she could not insist, you see, because—because acceptance might—might imply—sentiments as yet unexpressed."

Hope put her arms about the other's waist.

" 'Little remains to be told,' " quoted Flora, stroking the brown head. "The Prince departed for the metropolis, to enter journalism, and after many days the Damozel followed him, to express her soul in music. She and the Prince are still the best of friends; but they never speak of what was or what might have been."

Hope tightened her arms, and laid her cheek against Flora's bare shoulder. "The Prince will come some day," she whispered.

"I don't know why he should. If one may admire a favorite picture in a gallery, why should one wish to have it in one's house, where one would worry constantly over it?"

"Don't be cynical, dear."

"Besides, Churchill has become a confirmed woman-shunner. Collective womankind, he says, distresses him, and he gives it none of his society because the price he pays for what he receives is too high."

"That is selfish and egotistical."

"I dare say. But he is good enough to make an exception of my case."

"Beautiful pictures *are* the exception," said Hope.

Flora kissed her cheek. "How can you expect a man with brains to spend his time on girls, present

company not excepted? I shouldn't if I were a man—with brains."

"Still, I have read that they do."

"Oh, you have *read* that they do! You will learn it at first hand. But don't let them go to your head, dear; keep them at your feet."

"That argues want of intellect."

"On whose part?"

"Take it either way."

"Well, you'll find Arthur West at your feet, first, last and all the time."

"I suppose I may take *that* either way."

Flora laughed mischievously. "I warn you that Arthur is a good catch," she said. "He will have an ocean of money some day, and he is an unspoiled child of fortune; his disposition is absolutely perfect. When you first meet him he gives you the impression of being a bit of a clown, but that is only effervescence."

"Then he will not be dependent on his voice for a livelihood?"

"Fortunately not."

"Yet he takes his voice very seriously."

"As seriously as another takes the collecting of stamps or candlesticks. It's a harmless fad."

A little Swiss clock chimed two, and Flora started.

"Why, where can Rhoda be?" she exclaimed. "I had completely forgotten the child."

"Perhaps she has fallen upon some such adventure as myself," Hope suggested.

"Perhaps."

Miss Matheson stirred the fire, and Hope began to braid her hair.

"I don't know whether you will like Rhoda," said Flora meditatively. "She is a queer girl, and has absolutely no intimates, unless I except myself. Even I can make little of her. Still, you and Rhoda are such opposites, you may get along together famously. But it must be long past your bedtime." Flora rose. "Sleep as late as you please. Molly, the housekeeper, is hardened to my erratic hours. Good night."

Left alone, Hope continued by the fire, warming the lace-trimmed and beribboned night-dress lâid out for her, and meditating the story of the Prince and the Damozel. Her heart went out to the love-lorn maid. And yet how lightly she had sped the tale: did she love the Prince so very deeply? The end of the story could not have been so long ago. The end of the story? It was not yet ended, except for Princess Hope: *her* little romance was over.

She pursued her meditations among the bedclothes.

What romantic nonsense her mind had been running on! Pray, what could she have ever been to Churchill Gray? She would not interest him in the least. His sneering reference to feminine society was of a piece with his cutting remarks concerning music students, which still rankled.

Him banished, her thoughts should be concentrated in her music, never again to be withdrawn.

Through the partly-opened window came the sound of carriage wheels, stopping suddenly. What a pleasant way to travel about the city! The trolley-cars which Hope was forced to use carried such ill-smelling people.

The click of a key turning a lock brought her head up from the pillow. She heard a door shut softly, a rustle of skirts; then Flora's voice asking: "Is that you, Rhoda, dear?"

A whispered colloquy, and the house was still. Hope fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII

THE CRITIC TO THE "POST"

It lacked a few minutes to the closing time of the *Post's* noon edition. The city editor, a telephone receiver in each hand, was communicating with his far-flung reportorial line, betweenwhiles snapping out instructions to the men about him. Copy readers were struggling with refractory head-lines and calling impatiently for proofs. Reporters, bent over pad or typewriter, were setting down with nervous fingers a last few phrases of inconsequence. Nimble copy-boys in buttons scrambled and slid from desk to desk, gathering up the flying leaves. In the thick of it stood the foreman of the composing-room, awful in war-paint, masking volcanic temper with majestic calm.

One grimy hand clutched a mass of proofs and copy, the other was raised dramatically, palm outward, while from his ink-smeared lips went forth the familiar adhortation: "Hold her down! Hold her down!" to which nobody paid the slightest attention.

Serene amid the wrecks of copy and the crush of news, the managing editor smoked a cigarette and looked thoughtfully out of the window. One would have said he meditated some momentous question of journalistic policy: actually he was watching a pair of pretty girls, waiting on the far side of the street for a break in the procession of drays and street-cars.

Two other men in the spacious unpartitioned room were tranquil-tempered. The exchange editor clipped with deliberate shears. Mr. Churchill Gray, his contributions to the editorial page despatched, was opening his mail, most of which was addressed: "Musical Editor, the *Post*."

The first communication examined was an announcement of the forthcoming appearance of a local violinist of ordinary attainments, whom the anonymous writer credited with "masterly technic, superb tone production, and poetic insight."

"What more could one say of Ysaye?" remarked Gray to himself, jotting down a brief memorandum

and tossing the type-written slip into the waste-basket.

The second communication contained the vital information that Mr. Worthington Squeers, the eminent pianist and instructor, had changed his studio from No. 1701 Beaux Arts Temple to No. 1720.

The *Post* was further informed that M. Gaston Prunette, of the French Opera (stranded, M'sieurs! *mon Dieu*, was it not terreeble!), had consented to remain in the city, to equip for grand opera a limited number of exceptionally talented pupils; that Miss Edgarda Bing had been engaged as solo soprano for the music festival at Wappinger's Falls, New York; that the *Post* had neglected to review Miss Adèle Maverick's Thursday night concert—with a veiled suggestion that the *Post* critic was party to a conspiracy to suppress Miss Maverick, a feat impossible of accomplishment, let me assure you;—with other matter of equal moment.

The last envelope held an invitation to Mrs. Addison West's musicale. This followed into the waste-basket, and the critic to the *Post* began to cut the leaves of a new book waiting review.

"Two ladies to see you, Mr. Gray," a copy-boy announced. "Swell lookers."

"Indeed!" said Gray. "Is that your excuse, Jimmy, for not finding out what their business is?"

"I did ask 'em, Mr. Gray, an' de swellest girl said it was a matter of de utmost importance."

"Well, well!" he replied. "Fetch a couple of chairs, Jimmy, and then escort the swell lookers here in your best style."

Gray went on cutting the leaves of his book, but at sight of Miss Matheson and Miss Winston he rose quickly, and greeted them with unfeigned pleasure. Miss Winston bowed, somewhat distantly, and drew back a little way the chair which Jimmy had placed for her, leaving Flora to unfold the purpose of the visit.

The managing editor turned his thoughtful gaze in the direction of the music desk; the reporters crooked their necks; the exchange editor stilled his shears: only the city editor was oblivious to the radiance in the room.

"Something of the utmost importance, I am informed," said Gray.

Flora Matheson leaned forward, with an arm on his desk.

"Nothing short of a sensation, Mr. Churchill Gray. The musical world will be stirred from center to cir-

cumference. Mrs. Addison West is—to—give—a—musicale!"

"Ah!"

Gray's eyes wandered to the waste-basket. Flora, looking too, perceived the cause of his abstraction. Their eyes met, his quietly mirthful, hers flashing with pretended indignation.

"Cruel man!" She fished up Mrs. West's invitation. "But you shall not escape so easily. Thank you for the chair, Churchill: I shall sit in it till you promise to mention the musicale in next Saturday's music notes. No; don't refer to the society editor; I refuse to see her. In the music notes, or nowhere, I assure you."

"Perhaps we can manage it," Gray replied smoothly, opening a memorandum book.

"Thank you, Churchill." Flora beamed.

"Let us see: I shall have a third of a column Saturday for the music notes, half of which space I had thought to devote to a consideration of next week's Herschel concert—a rather important programme, as Ysaye is to play. Then there is Victor Mabbitt's all-Hummel concert, worth ten or a dozen lines; three other concerts of more or less significance, and an interesting and hitherto unpublished anecdote about

Brahms. Now, in order to make room for Mrs. West's social affair, which would you suggest that I cut—the Symphony concert or the Brahms anecdote?"

Flora's spirits fell. "Please, Churchill! Can't you squeeze in just a line or two?"

"The *Post* does not use rubber type, Miss Matheson."

She turned to Hope: "Transfix this obstinate man with a smile."

Miss Winston appeared faintly amused.

"Oh, you will have to do better than that," said Flora. "Must I resort to tears?"

"They would be wasted, I think," said Hope. "Mr. Gray moves in a mysterious way . . ." She looked out of the window.

From Gray the smile sardonic.

"I know that grin," said Flora in despair. "The case is hopeless. But promise me one thing, Churchill, and I'll forgive you—and take you to luncheon with us."

"I am listening, Miss Matheson."

"With deaf ears. Well, come to Mrs. West's musicale, or social affair, and personally write something nice about it. I don't care where you put it—in the religious column, if you wish."

"Please, Churchill! Just a line or two!" *Page 152*

"Thank you; I shall consider the invitation. What is it all about?"

"Why, you heartless wretch! You didn't even read it!" She smoothed out the crumpled invitation rescued from the basket. " 'To introduce Miss Marjorie Dodd, of Cleveland.' "

"In a group of Mrs. West's songs, I suppose."

"I suppose. Listen to them, Churchill, and you shall be rewarded. Miss Winston will give you a cup of coffee with her own fair hands, and perhaps, if you are good, a plateful of salad."

"Then the invitation is already accepted." He glanced at Miss Winston, whose glove suddenly required fastening.

"Will you come and lunch with us now?"

"With pleasure."

Gray closed his desk, and accompanied the young women to a near-by café.

"I don't mind confessing *now*," Flora remarked to Hope, "that I asked the lesser favor first. I did think I might induce Mr. Gray to squeeze a line about Mrs. West's function into his fearfully-important music notes, but I did not dare to hope I might persuade him actually to attend the musicale. It was the promise of the cup of coffee, was it not, Churchill?"

"Without doubt." He looked smilingly at Hope, whose eyes this time met the hazel eyes steadily and coolly.

He thought: "She has not yet forgiven me."

She thought: "It would be impossible to remain angry with him *very* long."

"I haven't seen you to talk to since you got back from the woods," said Flora. "You don't go out socially at all, do you?"

"I have no social connections, Miss Matheson."

"That's a fib. I can name a dozen drawing-rooms that would more than welcome you."

"For the advertising I might repay them with," Gray returned dryly. "Persons in my position are courted for no other purpose. I have no illusions on that subject."

"You wrong your friends, I am sure."

"Infrequently I may; in the majority of cases I do not. The rule, not the exception, must be my guide."

"Mrs. Maybury is one of the exceptions."

"Naturally. She is not a professional musician, nor a society dame. I can be of no advertising value to her."

Miss Matheson buttered a bit of bread. "That is *your* Mrs. Maybury," she said to Hope.

"You are acquainted with Mrs. Maybury, Miss Winston?" Gray inquired.

"Very slightly," she replied.

Flora proceeded to enlighten him, ignoring Hope's protest. "It is quite a story. Mrs. Maybury met Miss Winston in—"

"The provinces," Hope supplied.

"I hate that word provinces," Flora declared. "There is always a cheap sneer in it."

"I am waiting for the story," said Gray.

"Mrs. Maybury became interested in Miss Winston—naturally, and urged her to come to the city. And she sent you some music, did she not?"

"Bach and Beethoven and Czerny—a little of each: that is all I know of music, not even the A, B, C—only the B, C."

Miss Matheson was reminded of the man who bought an encyclopedia, one volume at a time. "You are very wise as far as you go."

"A good start, at all events," said Gray.

"And Miss Winston—this will be sure to interest you, Churchill—Miss Winston wept aloud when Mrs. Maybury played a Brahms Rhapsody for her. That shows the Brahms temperament, doesn't it?"

"The evidence is strongly circumstantial."

"Any one who gets hysterical over Brahms *must* have the Brahms temperament," Flora insisted. "I'm sure *I* haven't."

"Please, Flora!" pleaded Hope.

"I remember being swept off my feet by the rhapsodies," said Gray.

Sensing his growing interest in her, and perversely resolved not to encourage it, Hope left the topic tangentially.

"Won't you tell me something about your woods?" she besought him. "Do you go to them every year?"

"I hope to."

He spoke of an inland voyage he had made the summer past—a hundred miles or more; threading the waterways of the wilderness in a canoe, bearing the vessel on his shoulders from lake to lake, across the carries. He had set out, he said, to find a certain little lake; but he had missed it after all his toil, his progress barred by a tamarack swamp which seemed to have no bounds—a swamp ten miles across, as he afterward learned. Next year he meant to approach the lake by a more promising route.

"All that work just to look at a little pond that hardly shows on the map," said Flora, humoring the folly of it with a smile.

"And you were all alone!" said Hope, her eyes glistening.

He had spoken simply, but graphically, inspired by his subject; and in imagination she had accompanied him—silently, aloofly, as some spirit of the wood. She had helped him lift the canoe over the stones at the landing-places, and drop it gently at the carry's end. She had put forth with him upon strange waters, seated at the vessel's bow, first to glimpse the vistas of the river, or the new lake glory that the headland screened. She had sat by his camp-fire, sympathetically silent, and had watched the rose-light die and the stars quiver forth. She had stood at his side when he halted on the shore of the great swamp, and peered with him into the green gloom. . . .

"Has your lake a name?" she asked him.

"Not as yet," said Gray. "Will you suggest one?"

"The Lake of Dreams," she offered, and Flora, approving, added: "May they all come true."

The girls parted from Gray at the café door. He watched them till they melted in the stream of pedestrians; then he turned officeward with the remark: "So Leith Maybury is interested in Miss Winston! She must be the right sort."

Said Flora to her companion: "Mrs. West has tried to land Mr. Gray half a dozen times, and she has to thank you for netting him at last."

Miss Winston disclaimed rosily a share in Mrs. West's success, which, she intimated, was far from assured.

"Oh, he'll come," said Flora confidently. "One can see with half an eye that you have interested him."

"Absurd! And I haven't the least wish to."

The emphatic note amused, while it slightly mystified Miss Matheson. "That would account for it . . . if there were no other reasons," she smiled.

Hope shifted the talk to a safer, if less interesting subject. "Whither now?" she asked. "What citadels of criticism remain to be stormed?"

"The bluffs of the *Evening Telegraph*. We shall carry them with a rush."

The prediction was fulfilled, and, the campaign over, the fair invaders returned to their homes.

That afternoon Hope despatched a note to Mrs. Maybury, informing her that she had made the great venture, and requesting her to indicate a day when it would be convenient to receive Miss Winston in person.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CABOCHON EMERALD AGAIN

At the end of her second week of whirling with the Grindstone, Miss Winston took an account of musical stock. The showing was not especially encouraging.

Looking over her schedule of lessons, somewhat modified and expanded, she admitted she was getting a great deal of pork for her shilling; and she was not prepared to criticize the quality of the pork: it was highly recommended, and in prodigious demand. Still, judging by her one means of comparison,—her Bach and Czerny, which she practised quite independently of conservatory methods,—something was amiss. For example, one Czerny study, with the appalling metronome mark of 138, she had succeeded, when in Swift-

water, in working up to 120; now she was many notches below that tempo. If the reader does not comprehend how discouraging this was, he is advised to borrow a metronome and look into the matter for himself.

Not to set foot in the dreary wilderness of dogma (from which Heaven preserve us!) it may be said, without fear of contradiction, except from persons with uncommonly weird methods, that the essentials of pianoforte technic are strong fingers and a loose wrist. Lacking these, one can not go far; or rather, one can go so far and no farther. (Was it Moscheles that failed of greatness because of inflexible wrist? No matter.) Lacking these, one can not acquire in perfection that larger technic, not of the fingers, which distinguishes the artist from the garden variety of concert pianist.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty of wrist. This liberty, natural in Hope's case (genius is irritating to those of us that must toil for results), she felt she was losing: her fingers were not so fleet; half an hour's practice tired them. She felt, too, slight pangs of musical indigestion—a disease common enough, though not so common as literary indigestion.

Her studies interested her: the finger callisthenics,

and the various methods for acquiring arm power and volume of tone, were scientifically plausible; Professor Van Wart was saturating her with the spirit of the masters; the delightful Dudelsack dropped occasionally a gem that was not pure paste. And yet with it all she felt the lack of something—just what, she did not know.

Having promised to refer to Doctor Erdmann any perplexities that might arise, she sought the president of the Colossus and laid the matter before him. He listened attentively, providing an obligato of "Yes-yes"; and when she paused, unable definitely to formulate her problem, he said:

"My dear Miss Winston, let me counsel patience. I have inquired of your instructors, and they report satisfactory progress. The only criticism comes from Mrs. Adams, who finds your piano playing—er—a little cold, a little cold."

"I hope I shall outgrow that," Miss Winston murmured.

"Yes-yes—of course: it is not a temperamental defect. Mrs. Adams remarked—jestingly, of course—that you needed—er—an affair of the heart." He winged the arrow with a smile.

"Indeed?" said Hope, flushing. "It seems to me,

Doctor Erdmann, that I need technic more than anything else. My fingers—"

"Yes-yes; quite right. Technic first, passion afterward. That will come, that will come. . . . Well, Miss Winston, tell me frankly what your wishes are, and how I may aid you."

"I hardly know. But I feel that I am not getting on so fast as I ought to—or should like to."

"Hmh!" Doctor Erdmann joined his finger-tips and put on a thoughtful look. "Class work is slow, Miss Winston; slow, I mean, as compared to private instruction, where much more time can be given; and private instruction is expensive."

"Yes; I suppose so—of course it must be." She realized she had no tangible ground for complaint. "I am not finding fault, Doctor Erdmann; please do not think that. Of course I do not expect private instruction. Only—you see—I am anxious to get on; I have a long road to go. Perhaps if I had fewer studies—"

"As I have said," the president of the Colossus pursued, "our motto is, Encourage talent at any cost, at any cost: let no soul go unexpressed. But, of course, there are limits, there are limits; you understand that. What studies especially interest you?"

"Piano and theory," was Hope's prompt reply.

"Professor Geist, our chief instructor in theory, charges six dollars the hour. Our best piano instructors ask as much, or more."

Hope felt as a child might that had begged for the moon and had been gently reproved.

"However," Doctor Erdmann leaned back in his chair—"however, Miss Winston, I have become personally interested in your artistic success, and the item of expense shall not stand in the way."

She looked up swiftly, and he banked the fire of his eyes.

"As to piano, Mrs. Adams will do for the present; later we shall make a change. As to theory, which you properly place second in importance, what do you say—er—to Professor Geist?" His eyes twinkled.

"Oh, Doctor Erdmann!"

He smiled indulgently, resisting an impulse to pat her cheek.

"*Might* I study with Professor Geist?"

"That is for Professor Geist to answer. Application must be made to him."

"But you said that . . . Professor Geist charges . . ."

"I will arrange that in the office, Miss Winston. In

talking with Professor Geist it will not be necessary to allude to finances. That shall be a little secret between you and me. In the cause of Art—" He finished the sentence with a gesture that implied, "Hang the expense!"

"I can not find words to thank you, Doctor Erdmann." Hope was quite overcome with gratitude. "But I will study hard, very hard, and I hope you will not be disappointed in me."

"I hope not, Miss Winston," he echoed fervently; "and I do not think I shall. You have youth, beauty, talent—these are the great things; the rest will follow."

Hope rose precipitately, pricked by the compliment and the glance accompanying it. "Thank you again, Doctor Erdmann. I shall apply to Professor Geist at once. Good morning."

"Good morning, my dear Miss Winston. Let me know frequently how you get on. Come in at any time, at any time. And—don't forget our little secret."

She assured him she should not, and departed in high spirits.

"Doctor Erdmann is a dear," she said to herself; "only I wish he wouldn't make remarks about my

looks. He must have confidence in me, and yet I do not know why he should. Perhaps it is because I take music seriously, and am not studying merely to become a teacher."

Madame Jesurin was promptly informed of the good fortune, Hope forgetting until the words were out that Doctor Erdmann had said it should be a little secret between them. Madame was vocal in the good man's praise. Such a thoughtful, considerate gentleman! Once he had sent her a German pupil. Everybody spoke highly of him. He was very popular.

The next morning brought another pleasant surprise. The postman left a square envelope containing a ticket for that evening's Symphony concert. There was no other inclosure, except a sheet of blank paper in which the ticket was folded. The address, simply "Miss Winston, No. 69 Atwood Street," was typewritten.

Who could have sent it? She peeped into the envelope to make certain she had extracted all the contents. There was only the blank slip of paper and the bit of yellow pasteboard calling for a seat in the parquet of Music Hall—J 90. Who could have sent it?

Her mind ran the small circle of her acquaintance,

stopping, on the second round, at Doctor Erdmann. Was this a delicate way of further assisting her? In spite of Mr. Churchill Gray's fling at conservatories, the president of the Colossus no doubt appreciated the value of the Herschel concerts to a young woman seriously pursuing the study of music.

Madame Jesurin, coming in to borrow a cup of sugar, found her with the ticket in her hand.

"*Ei! Ei!*" cried Madame, when informed of the mysterious gift. "The fairies have sent it."

"Then I wish they had sent two, so you might have shared in the good fortune."

Madame laughed, and declared that fairies gave nothing to grown-ups except children.

"But I, too, have some good luck to tell of," she said. "You remember, *Liebchen*, the interesting young man with the curling hair, that we met at the concert —Mr. West?"

Oh, yes; Hope recalled him distinctly; a pleasant-spoken young gentleman.

"He has arranged to take both French and German lessons."

Why, how delightful! So Mr. West was interested in languages. Of course; he was a singer.

Gewiss. Private lessons. And he did not even ask

Madame's fee. Such a liberal person—would there were more like him. But he had inquired as to her method of instruction, and was good enough to praise it highly, rating it above all others he had knowledge of. He was to come Tuesday and Friday evenings.

Hope smiled, and remarked that it was unfortunate Madame did not teach five other languages: Mr. West might then call every evening in the week.

Of the ways and wiles of the artful creature Man, Miss Winston had no experience; and but for the sisterly hint conveyed to her by that wise virgin, Flora Matheson, she might not have suspected a connection between Mr. Arthur West's frank pleasure in her society and his sudden interest in foreign languages. But after Flora's blunt intimation of the young gentleman's sentiments she could scarcely doubt that he had taken up French and German partly, at least, that he might be near her, that his opportunities of seeing her and talking with her might be larger.

There may be dismal persons so constituted as to receive with indifference an intimation that he or she has inspired the sentiment of love in the breast of some member of the opposite sex; but you and I are not of this hopeless minority, nor would we wish to be. True, the discovery may kindle no responsive flame; but our

interest in the fortunate man or maid is increased tenfold. We give him (if it be a man) generously of our thought; we feel ourselves wondering whether he would be very, very unhappy were we for ever to withdraw the sun of our presence. It would be unwise, of course, consciously to encourage a hopeless passion; but, on the other hand, it would be nothing short of cruel to avoid its possessor, or to subdue those natural charms which first allured him, and in the contemplation of which he is at least transiently happy. No; common humanity dictates that we be to his virtues very kind; and generosity declares that, since the ultimate felicity must be withheld, we should not stint those minor blessings with which we are free to dower him. Thus, a young woman less tender-hearted than Miss Winston would have decided to remain at home, as far as possible, on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

Contemplation of a good deed induces a mental serenity. In such a pleasant frame of mind Miss Winston set forth to attend the third Symphony concert.

Music Hall was crowded, for an eminent soloist was on the programme. Hope's parquet chair was on the left aisle, ten rows from the stage; and, recalling that Mr. Gray had said his seats were well forward, she

looked around in the hope of seeing him; as he was not visible, she concluded he must sit on the other side of the house. The chair beside her was unoccupied, and remained so. This was noteworthy only because no other vacant seat was observable.

Hope was at first abashed by the elaborate toilets of the women about her. The odors they exhaled *did* suggest drug-store blotters, as Gray had remarked, and they wore a great quantity of what is irreverently termed "junk." Still, a few were as plainly dressed as herself, and the others were dismissed with the opening measures of the Beethoven overture.

When intermission came she prepared to join the promenade in the foyer; but as the persons in her immediate vicinity elected to remain where they were, she was disinclined to make herself conspicuous by marching up the aisle.

There was such a crush in the foyer when the concert ended that the chance of seeing a familiar face was small; still, as she passed into the vestibule she perceived Rhoda Weathers a little distance ahead, and pressed forward to speak with her. But she was less experienced than the other girl in threading passage through a crowd, and the space between them widened.

After debouching, the stream of concert-goers

spread out, and Hope was able to quicken her steps and tread close on Rhoda's heels. But even as she stretched out a hand to touch the other's arm, Rhoda vanished into a waiting cab, and a man's hand closed the door from within. This hand, clutching a glove, rested an instant on the top of the dropped sash, disclosing, on the little finger, a ring which Hope had seen before—a cabochon emerald set in a band of dull steel.

So! The man in the cab was Doctor Rudolf Erdmann.

Rhoda Weathers, Hope reflected on her way home, was a queer young woman, and affected her strangely. Their acquaintance was limited to one meeting, at breakfast with Miss Matheson, on which occasion Flora and Hope did almost all the talking. Reserved, even with Miss Matheson ("a difficult child," Flora termed her); intense, as her big brown eyes exhibited; given, as her friend testified, to protracted fits of melancholy,—Rhoda Weathers was a sharp contrast to Hope Winston, who was reserved enough among strangers, but frank and often impetuous with her friends.

Yet, despite their antagonistic natures, which Hope

sensed, she was strongly attracted to the brown-eyed lass: an invisible tie seemed to bind them together. She could not explain this, nor can I do better than to quote Monsieur Maeterlinck:

"What I say often counts for so little, but my presence, the attitude of my soul, my future and my past, that which will take birth in me, that which is not dead, a secret thought, the stars that approve, my destiny, the thousands of mysteries which surround me and float about yourself—all this it is that speaks to you at that tragic moment."

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAKING OF A GOWN

Masculine readers of Princess Hope's biography will, of course, wish to know that the material for her new gown was neither the "clinging black stuff," which Miss Matheson humorously suggested, nor the cerise-figured foulard which Madame Jesurin, who went a-shopping with her, advised. Hope selected a dove-gray albatross, to be trimmed simply with silk bands of the same gray tone.

The decision was not easily come at. The problem of expense had to be considered in all its perplexing details, and hours spent in looking over fashion plates and hints.

It was also decided that Madame De Bitte, who lived in the flat below, should cut and fit the gown. Hope could sew, and Mrs. Grady's machine was placed at her disposal.

"Grand value," said Madame De Bitte, when she learned the price of the gray albatross. "Grand value; you must have got it at a sale."

In spite of her name, Madame Agnes De Bitte was not an "importer," nor even a "modiste"; she was merely a dressmaker. She did not maintain a "parlor," nor a "salon," nor an "*atelier*"; just a dressmaker's shop. Madame, to go further, was neither the incredibly symmetrical creature who designs the frocks of society, nor the anæmic wisp of humanity who "goes out by the day." She had a great deal of shape, such as it was: her waist measure coquetted with forty; and as, unlike a cup defender, she did not "work well in stays," and so discarded them, her figure may safely be left to the reader's imagination.

No time was to be lost in the making of the gown, as Mrs. Addison West's musicale was for Thursday evening; thus when Madame De Bitte announced that she was ready to "try on," Hope dropped her piano practice and went below, Madame Jesurin following with her knitting and the sunshine of her society.

Behold Madame De Bitte, sunk upon one knee, her mouth full of pins. "Will she ever be able to get up again?" Hope wondered.

"You have a grand figure, Miss Winston," said the dressmaker, smoothing down the lines of the skirt.

Madame Jesurin capped the compliment with a more pointed reference to Miss Winston's physical attractions; whereat the young lady blushed a deep rose, and steered the Countess on another tack.

"Did you attend the Buddhist services yesterday?"

No. Madame had decided that the Buddhist creed was not precisely what her soul craved: Gautama and his verities fell short of her spiritual needs: philosophically considered they left so much to be desired. "I asked Sister Isabelle, 'What is truth?' She was dumfounded."

Shallow! shallow! If one can not say, offhand, what truth is, there is an end of pretension.

"That fits well over the hips," said Madame De Bitte. She made a botch of trying to rise, so sat on the floor. "Now, shall I make a train?"

"I think not," replied her patron. She had never worn a train, and it seemed best not to begin just yet.

Madame Jesurin voted for the train, and Madame De Bitte sought to compromise on "a little one," just

sweeping the floor. But Miss Winston preferred that the skirt should hang full, just touching all around.

"As you please," acquiesced the dressmaker. Her second attempt to regain her feet was successful. "We will now fit the waist."

"I am much attracted by New Thought," said Madame Jesurin, plying her knitting needles. "It is most interesting."

"New Thought?" said Hope. "Is it a religion?"

"*Gewiss:* a religion of vibrations, of thought force."

"Be sure to make the arms loose," Madame De Bitte was instructed.

"Oh, you pianists!" she exclaimed, and was reminded of the trials of Madame Friedenthal's modiste, who once delivered a frock to that artist, only to be informed that Madame found it impossible to play the piano in it. As it was for a concert that very night, the modiste had to sit by the piano and refit the waist, Madame Friedenthal pausing in her practice now and then to try on.

Madame De Bitte had the story from the modiste's washerwoman; for, of course, modistes and dressmakers do not move in the same set.

"There, are those arms comfortable now?" she asked, and was smilingly assured they were.

"New Thought is soul expression in its simplest terms," Madame Jesurin pursued. "No priests, no public services, no temples: wherever you may be, there a temple is. It is simplicity itself."

"Too plain," said Madame De Bitte, her mind on the gown. "Steel passementerie would look well."

Miss Winston demurred.

"Tell me about the vibrations, Madame Jesurin. Do you make them yourself?"

"*Natürlich*—and receive them from others. One joins the Circle of the Vibrant Very, and exchanges thought waves of health, happiness, success, and so on. One affirms the potentialities of vibrant possibilities."

"That sounds rather difficult."

"Not at all. It is all very plain."

"A little chiffon would relieve it," Madame De Bitte pleaded.

"I think the silk bands will be sufficient," replied Hope.

Dressmakers have a mania for trimming on, just as barbers for trimming off. The one can not fathom your desire for simplicity, the other your aversion to a prison crop. Both must be restrained with a firm hand.

"It is called Sitting in the Silence," said Madame Jesurin.

Hope sought to image Madame sitting in the Silence. Alas for the Silence!

"One sits in the Silence, and strives, by concentration, meditation and affirmation, to vibrate in tune with the great Chord of Truth."

"The Chord of Truth?" Hope harked back to her theory lessons. "Is that the tonic chord of C? I have read that C is nature's key."

Madame was not prepared to affirm the root of the Great Chord.

"Or perhaps it's the dominant. Truth crushed to earth, you know. It's the same with the dominant; you can't suppress it."

There were times when Madame Jesurin suspected that Miss Winston was politely guying her; but her eyes were so innocent, her face so demure, Madame's suspicion was rootless as a lichen.

"I must put my tea-kettle on," she said, and went up stairs.

When she became an adept in New Thought she would likely boil water with thought-waves. At present Mrs. Grady's old-thought cook-stove would have to answer.

"Madame Jesurin has a grand mind," remarked the dressmaker.

Miss Winston agreed, and inquired whether her piano practice annoyed Madame De Bitte.

"Oh, dear, not in the least. It is just like playing."

"Do you go to concerts?"

No; Madame seldom attended a concert; few dressmaking hints are to be picked up at musical entertainments; the opera or horse-show is better.

The door-bell rang smartly. Waddling to the window, Madame De Bitte saw a carriage and a handsome pair of bays standing before the house. She answered the bell in a flutter: hitherto her patrons had arrived on foot.

"I am looking for Miss Winston," Hope heard the visitor say, and, herself in a flutter, meditated flight up stairs via the back hall. But before she could effect an escape the dressmaker ushered Mrs. Maybury into the room.

"So!" exclaimed Enlightenment. "I have surprised you." She took Hope's hands and pressed them affectionately. "No, no; the dressmaking shall not be interrupted; I can stay but a moment. I happened to be in this part of town, so answered your note in person. What a pretty gray gown you are making!"

"It's going to be grand," declared Madame De Bitte. "But it's dreadful plain; and she won't let me put a thing on it. Now, wouldn't you say a lace yoke, or a bit of chiffon?"

"Miss Winston will relieve the plainness," replied Mrs. Maybury, smiling. "My dear girl, I am very glad to see you again, and I wish to have a long talk with you about your music and yourself. Can you spend Friday with me?—that is the first day I have clear."

"Yes."

"Good. Come in the afternoon, and remain for dinner. In the evening we shall have some music. You are looking remarkably fresh and well; yet you write me you have been working hard."

"I am tireless, Mrs. Maybury."

Enlightenment sighed, and gathered her furs about her. "What would I not give for tirelessness! Friday afternoon, then. Good-by."

She nodded to the dressmaker, who held the door open reverently, and passed out.

"A grand lady!" said Madame De Bitte. "Them furs never cost a cent less than a thousand dollars. And she has a footman, too."

Her opinion of Miss Winston was correspondingly

increased. Fortunately for her patron's purse, the price of the dressmaking had been fixed in advance.

On Thursday evening, at seven of the clock, Hope stood before her mirror, putting a last few touches to her hair. Madame De Bitte had been summoned to shift a hook in the gray gown's collar, and was now scanning the whole closely for a possible basting-thread.

The gown fitted perfectly, and the effect was charming, though Madame De Bitte still bemoaned the fact that it was "dreadful plain."

" 'Tain't too late," she urged. "I have two yards of grand lace left over from the last dress I made."

Hope remained adamant to Madame's wiles, and the dressmaker, yielding the battle with a sixty-pound sigh, departed.

It was almost time for the carriage which Mrs. West was to send, and Hope ran into Madame Jesurin's apartments for that amiable critic's final word.

"*Ach, Liebchen,* you forgot your powder," said Madame.

"Do I need powder?"

"*Aber natürlich!* Always you put powder on."

"But I have none."

Madame provided the indispensable, and Mrs. Grady was then called in. That good woman, in the exuberance of her admiration, implanted a motherly kiss on Hope's cheek—but gingerly, lest she disturb a hair of the picture.

"Come in, dearie, and show yourself to John," she said. " 'Twill do the man good."

The nominal head of the Grady household lowered his newspaper and looked over the rim of his spectacles. "My, my! you're a jew'l," quoth he. " 'Tis a sight for sore eyes. My! my!"

"It's poetical ye are getting, John," laughed Mrs. Grady; and John, abashed by his own eloquence, plunged back into foreign politics.

Both Madame and Mrs. Grady saw Hope safely deposited in the carriage.

"Cinderella!" cried our Princess gaily, waving an adieu.

"Contrive to lose a slipper!" Madame called after her.

"Heaven bless the darlin'!" said Mrs. Grady; and with a corner of her apron she wiped away a precious tear of sentiment.

CHAPTER XV

MRS. ADDISON WEST'S MUSICALE

Mrs. Addison West, as Miss Matheson hinted to Miss Winston, was deservedly popular among the musicians, artists and literati of her city. She was a liberal patron of the arts, she gave excellent dinners, and her husband's cigars and liqueurs were above criticism.

Addison West made his money in real estate, and he had a great deal of it. The West residence, a handsome brick pile, was among the largest and finest in Prospect Avenue, a street of stately mansions. Its furnishings were for the most part colonial, as Mrs. West was a Colonial Dame ("or something of that sort," as her son Arthur would observe); and I, for

one, can think of no pleasanter way to pass a dull hour than to sit in her close-packed drawing-room (in which a cat can scarcely get about, so trophied is it with scalp-locks of Culture) and listen while she reads —very musically, too—from the Great Book of Pedigrees.

Mrs. West was properly proud of her Bay State ancestry, as you or I should be were we similarly blessed. Strange to say, she had never set foot in New England. She had no living relatives within its borders, and one can not visit one's ancestors—or is in no haste to. But her eyes were ever turned toward Massachusetts, and she used the Harvard "a."

Mrs. West was uncommonly tall and stately. She had black hair, and very dark and dreamy brown eyes. Her voice, except in club debate, was almost inaudible, and she entered a room like a shadow: a faint rustling of silk, and you beheld her.

The reader already knows that she was more interested in music than in almost any other thing. She agreed with Doctor Dudelsack, whom she prodigiously admired, that of all means of soul expression, music was the most satisfactory. The reader also knows that she was a composer—chiefly of songs, which she dedicated to singers of her acquaintance, who were

very glad to sing them, I have no doubt. A trivial detail may be added: the original inspiration, the heaven-born melody of the song, was harmonized and set in contrapuntal order by Doctor Dudelsack. These melodies Mrs. West saw as in a vision—floating in the air: it was the more prosaic business of Dudelsack to seize the unembodied and oftentimes elusive spirit, clothe it with harmonic flesh, and pump the red corpuscles of counterpoint into it. This operation commonly took place in Mrs. West's sanctum on the top floor of the house; a sequestered apartment in which it was her wont to "commune with her soul."

Here, too, it was frequently her privilege first to hear those Dudelsackian gems which later (in lectures) delighted the ears of students, and (in programme notes) helped so many music-lovers through the brambles of Brahms and the hazel-brush of Richard Strauss. Should she ever forget with what emotion she listened to that masterpiece beginning—

"Hark! Is that flimmering on the violins the stealthy footfall of some ravening creature of the wild? No; 'tis but the night wind moaning through rustling leaves . . ."

Forget it? 'Twas graven on her soul.

Still, do not assume that Mrs. West was for ever in

the clouds, for ever "communing" in her soul eyrie. It was conceded that the Social Dynamics Club, sometimes referred to as the Gratiano Club (Gratiano, you remember, spoke "an infinite deal of nothing") never had an abler president, one with a firmer grasp on large affairs. To observe Mrs. West, gavel in hand, steering debate on the moot-question, "Who Owns the Earth?" was to exclaim: "Here is a practical woman, with no nonsense about her."

Neither must you assume that Mrs. West's intellectual stature dwarfed her husband to insignificance, as is so often the case. True, he fell within the classification "commercial," and made no pretense at Culture; but he had a pretty taste in pictures and bookbindings; and while he gave himself no musical airs, and was known privately to speak as disrespectfully of Doctor Dudelsack as Jeffrey spoke of the Equator, yet he was observed to listen to good music with a quiet enjoyment, and was a loyal supporter, with purse and presence, of the Symphony Orchestra. Addison West was quite as popular as his versatile wife; each respected the other, agreeing as to the main things in life; and both were extremely fond of their son, who must be reckoned among the most fortunate of youths.

I hope you have received a definite impression of

Mrs. West; for if love's young dream should come true for a certain young gentleman, you would be glad to know what sort of mother-in-law fell to the lot of Princess Hope.

The possibility of such relationship was in Mrs. West's mind when she greeted Miss Winston on the evening of the musicale. Critically regarding the object of her son's admiration, she acknowledged the boy had good taste; and since he must inevitably marry a musician, he might go farther and fare worse. Thus it was with a faint touch of the mother-in-law manner that she escorted Miss Winston through the drawing-rooms, and presented her to the celebrities, major and minor, that thronged them.

Flora Matheson, coming down the stair from the dressing-room, first espied her young friend in converse with Churchill Gray, who had arrived unusually early—for him. ("In order," said Flora cynically, "that he may run away the earlier.")

"Oh, this will never do," she exclaimed, going up to the pair. "There is altogether too much *gray* here." She plucked the red roses from her girdle and fastened them in Hope's. "There,"—standing off a bit and tilting her head critically—"that improves the effect wonderfully. Don't you think so, Churchill?"

He did not answer at once, occupied in comparing the roses in Hope's cheeks with those given her by Flora.

"I would suggest one flower in the hair," he said at last.

Flora acted on the suggestion, declaring: "You are an artist, Churchill."

"Better have escaped hanging," he replied.

"And worse have not. I leave him in your charge, Hope, and shall hold you accountable if he runs away."

With which Flora left them, and hastened to greet Mr. Stanley Arthur Jones, who, looking very handsome and distinguished, bent over her finger-tips in quite the manner of a Gentleman of France.

The movement of this history being, to say the least, deliberate, we need not stand still to consider the star of the present evening, Marjorie Dodd. Let it suffice that she was blonde and assertive, and that she sang indifferently well. Nor need we pause critically to examine the half-dozen songs she sang (Minerva West: opus 31). Must you be informed that they were lovely, charming, splendid, sweet, cute? Surely not. You in your time have murmured the adjectives, and meant them every whit as sincerely. They are much

easier to say (in public) than stupid, trivial, foolish, worthless.

This song group was the only set piece of the musical fireworks. With the last shower of sparks the audience broke ranks, thereafter to listen or not, as they pleased, to what might follow.

Relieved of the task of turning music for Doctor Dudelsack, who played Miss Dodd's accompaniments, Arthur West looked around for Miss Winston. He found her with his mother, who presently was attracted elsewhere.

"Aren't your ears burning?" he asked, dropping into the vacated seat.

"No. Why?"

"So many compliments flying about. Shall I repeat them?"

"If you do I'll go and talk to Doctor Dudelsack."

"*Can* you? I get seasick listening to him. '*Hark! is that flimmering on the violins the stealthy footfall*' . . . How does the rest of it go? Mother knows it by heart."

"It is worth remembering. Tell me, who is that important-looking person?" She indicated a languid gentleman by the piano, in conversation with Miss Dodd.

"That? Oh, sh-h-h!—That's Whelpley, of the *Musical Sandbagger.*"

"Then he *is* as important as he looks."

"More so, if anything. He holds the destinies of all musicians in the hollow of his hand. But he's condescending — frightfully condescending. . . . Hello! there's Van Wart."

"*That* Professor Van Wart? Oh, no!"

"Fact, I assure you."

She stared, incredulous. Could that jolly little ball of a man, with the hearty laugh and the twinkling eyes, circulating about the room with a nod here and a hand-shake there—could that be the dismal individual who communed with the spirits of the masters in the Studio of the Soul?

"Quite another chap when he goes out socially," said Arthur. "Checks his soul with his hat."

Hope bubbled with merriment, and rewarded the happy young man at her side with a glance that was almost tender.

And with this he was forced to be content for a little while; for Karl Geist, yielding perforce to the gentle beseechment of the hostess, favored the company with a violin selection.

Hope, who had never heard him touch bow to

string before, was surprised by the fire and the poetry of his playing, despite the fact that he was seemingly indifferent to the effect he might be producing. She discovered that he had the same power to move her possessed by Madame Friedenthal, which she found so lamentably lacking in the Grindstone's staff pianists and fiddlers.

"What was it?" she asked Arthur eagerly.

"Andante, by Godard, or something of that sort," he answered, and laughed: "Mother ambushed Karl Geist neatly. You know he never takes his fiddle with him—simply refuses; so mother got one and had it all ready for him."

Hope smiled, though inwardly she disapproved of Mrs. West's stratagem. "I suppose Professor Geist gets tired of the sound of a violin," she said.

"Oh, no; he teaches very few pupils—only the most advanced; and he will scrape by the hour for you if he happens to feel like it. He doesn't play like a teacher, does he?"

"Why does he not give concerts?"

"He claims, for one thing, that he hasn't enough technic, and, for another, that he would rather teach than eat. He *is* a born teacher."

"But to play before thousands, to hold them in a

spell of enchantment! Oh, to make them feel what *I* have felt!"

"Geist, I think, would rather teach them to do that than do it himself. When he gets hold of a promising pupil, like Rhoda Weathers, he will work harder than she will. In Rhoda's case, however, I suspect he is interested in more ways than one. . . . Oh, Lord!" Arthur groaned sepulchrally. "Fanny Skinner is going to screech. Why didn't we escape when we had the chance?"

He glanced ruefully at the one semi-secluded nook in the overlighted mansion, the hall settle in the angle of the stair, now in possession of Karl Geist and Churchill Gray.

Miss Skinner expressed vocally the mournful fact that "there are no birds in last year's nests," and under cover of the applause that followed, Arthur and Hope joined the pair in the cozy-corner. Gray surrendered his seat to Miss Winston, and Arthur fetched a couple of chairs.

Mrs. Romanta Drewl, an elocutionist, after much cajoling, was finally persuaded to recite something.

"It's a shame to tease her so," West declared.

"Is there any one more reluctant about coming forward than an elocutionist?" Geist queried.

"A lady harp-player," mildly suggested Gray.

"Silence on the anvils!" Arthur commanded, as the elocutionist began.

They disposed themselves resignedly to listen, now and then exchanging glances of cheer and comfort. Suddenly a strange thing happened; the elocutionist broke down!

"A miracle!" Geist exclaimed *sotto voce.*

"Nothing short of one could have saved us," said Gray.

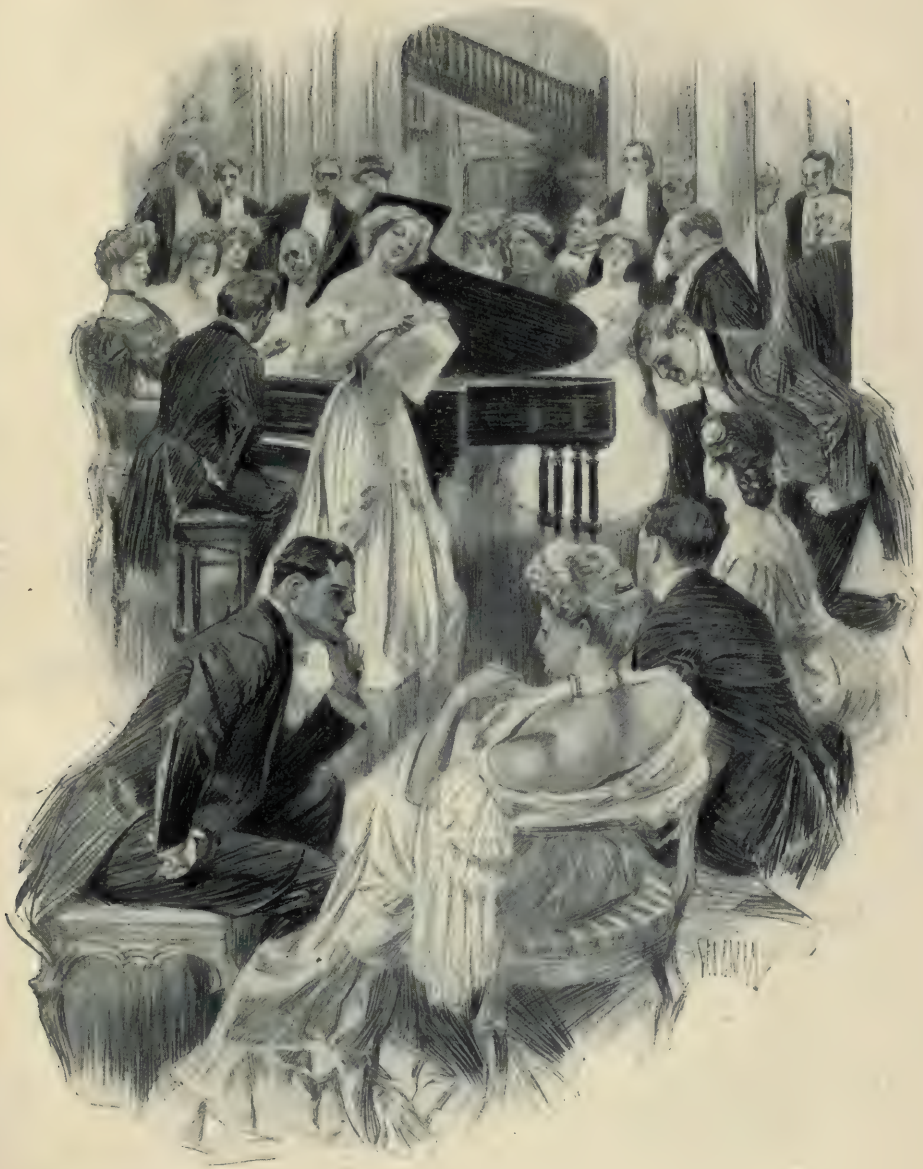
"Don't halloo till you're out of the woods," said Hope. "She may try something else."

The suggestion alarmed them, but needlessly.

"She's done for," said Arthur gleefully. "The catastrophe has stunned her. See, they are leading her away."

A murmur of sympathy and admiration went round. "Wasn't it a lovely little thing! Don't you think it was a lovely little thing?" "Isn't it too bad she can't remember the rest!" "It was awfully good of her to try. . . ."

"And now again," said Geist, "the coy and diffident Miss Skinner."

Miss Skinner was heard to remark to her accompanist that she would "sing that nocturne now." And

"The coy and diffident Miss Skinner" *Page 192*

to the company, prefatorily: "I can't sing at *all* this evening: I don't know what the trouble is."

The nocturne went lamely.

"Really," declared the cantatrice, "with my throat in such condition it is positively cruel for me to sing."

The Cozy-Corner Quartette (*aside*)—"To us, yes."

"However"—Miss Skinner placed a third song before her accompanist—"this may go better."

No comparisons were drawn—publicly.

The Cozy-Corner Quartette (*aside*)—"*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.*"

Miss Skinner's departure was heartily acclaimed by all present.

"Mynheer Van Wart is now besought," remarked Gray.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Hope. "I am curious to hear him play."

"I fear your curiosity will remain unsatisfied," said Geist dryly; "mine has."

"But he was Liszt's *favorite favorite* pupil."

"Johnson had his Boswell."

"But Boswell was not unable to write," Gray observed.

"I dare say Van Wart can play. Still, it is something to refrain."

"At least it disarms criticism," said Hope.

Said Arthur: "My opinion is that Van Wart was so busy picking up Liszt's collar-buttons, cigarette stubs and burnt matches, he hadn't time to learn much about piano playing."

Flora Matheson approached.

"Mrs. West," she said, "presents her compliments to Professor Geist, and *will* he be so adorable as to play a Grieg sonata with Mr. Victor Mabbitt who, for his part, has consented."

Geist rose, then turned a quizzical look upon the other members of the Cozy-Corner Quartette.

"Dare I 'leave my reputation behind me'?"

"I'll defend it for you," said Flora, taking his seat.

"You!" Geist gestured despair. "Then I am indeed lost."

Their mocking laughter followed him.

CHAPTER XVI

A FURTHER ACCOUNT OF THE MUSICALE

Doubtless there were carpers on Olympus to pick flaws in the songs of Apollo. It is less conceivable that the drink of the gods suffered criticism; from all accounts, Nectar was an incomparable wine, unsurpassed to this day. Thus, the company that listened to the songs of Minerva West may have harbored various opinions as to their merits, but of the punch which Addison West composed for the occasion there was only one opinion, and that a golden.

As a composer of polyphonic punches, West was worthy of place among the old masters. The list of his compositions rivaled in number those of Orlando di

Lasso, in diversity those of Mozart. His "Eroica" punch (opus 53) was famous: composed in the Phrygian mode, it fired the consumer with a lofty patriotism and a reckless valor, happily unrequired by any subsequent emergency. Another famous opus, composed in the Eolian mode, was his "Bacchanal," reserved for stag parties, as being a trifle too festive for politer gatherings. On the infrequent occasions when his wife entertained the Social Dynamics Club, West ventured the Lydian mode. The result was sufficiently melancholy.

Connoisseurs preferred his *absolute* punch to his *programme* or descriptive compositions. As Karl Geist put it, West's absolute punch did not appeal merely to the senses; it revealed imagination, and demanded imagination on the part of the imbiber. To miss the intellectual note was to miss the whole.

West's latest opus, which was among his most successful, may be described as a free fantasia. It contained a little of everything; yet the harmonic web was so deftly woven, the pattern so cunningly contrived (here, if anywhere, a mixed metaphor is pardonable), 'twas impossible to detect a thread-end.

Under the benign influence of this concoction the bores became endurable, and the stiffness of the bored

relaxed; the judicious gave over grieving, and the unskilful laughed the louder. A memorable punch!

The denser refreshments which accompanied it were in keeping. Ambrosial salads, sandwiches and coffee were dispensed by half a dozen pretty maids, Miss Winston among the number; and more than once, hearing herself compared to Hebe, Hope felt her ears burn smartly with her cheeks. She declined the punch to which the junior West invited her: she was sufficiently excited by the social electricity. And when Churchill Gray presented himself for the promised cup of coffee, she gave it to him with a hand that trembled a little.

"I hope it will not keep you awake," she smiled.

"Nothing is more certain," he said.

"Then already I am conscience-stricken."

"Radiantly so."

"I conceal my pleasures poorly, I know. Still, I would not give you sleepless nights."

"You have assured me such already: the coffee will be merely incidental."

She flushed. "You have tried the punch, I see."

"And deserve the thrust," he answered humbly. "This draft is bitter now."

"Permit me." She dropped another lump of sugar in his coffee.

He thanked her gravely, and gave place to Stanley Arthur Jones, riding his archaic hobby-horse.

"Three cubes of sweetness and the merest hint of cream," said the author.

Hope passed the cup with the remark: "The formula suggests Miss Matheson."

Mr. Jones bowed. "A replica for myself," he requested. "Our tastes are parallel."

"Parallel tastes never meet, Mr. Jones."

He smiled flashingly. "Shrewdly worded, egad! Your servant, Miss Winston."

Mynheer Van Wart and Victor Mabbitt appeared.

"Black coffee, if you please," said the former.

She gave it to him with the admonishment: "Consider your nerves, Professor."

"Nerves? Nerves?" He turned to Mabbitt: "What are nerves, Victor?"

"The plural puzzles you, I see," said Mabbitt.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Van Wart, clapping the other on the shoulder.

Fragments of dialogue floated by the coffee-urn. Mrs. Romanta Drewl, complimenting the evening star, remarked: "You are in such refreshing contrast, Miss Dodd, to the run of musicians. They pay so little attention to stage presence, more especially instrumental

artists. The average pianist is either abrupt and jerky or haphazard and slouchy; as if nothing was of importance except the playing. You have seen Madame Friedenthal carry roses off the stage. Isn't it absurd! You would think they were red-hot. And with her handkerchief wrapped round the stems! Afraid of hurting her hands, I suppose."

Arthur West was telling a lady that it was too bad the So-and-So's were unblessed with children. Said Arthur: "They ought to have a son or a daughter, or something of that sort." Whereat the lady tittered.

Another lady, presented to Mynheer Van Wart, inquired: "And how is Mrs. Van Wart? I remember her piano playing with so much pleasure."

"Madame," returned Van Wart, "you must be thinking of my first wife; my present wife is a singer."

Flora Matheson was explaining the Sudo piano method to Mr. Jones: "You count—one, two, three—at each count describing with your finger a circle in the air. At four you strike the piano. This devitalizes the wrist."

"Ah, yes. And the object of devitalization?"

"That the soul's inspiration may flow unimpeded to the finger-tips."

"Egad, how very interesting! But why the circle?"

"The circle is a symbol of perfection," expounded Miss Matheson.

"Fore gad, Miss Flora, I am cousin to Dullness. I observe, then, that you are three hours in the air to one on the keyboard."

"Now you are bright again."

"Reflected light, from a central luminary."

"I read that in a book—one of yours."

"History repeats itself: may not the historical novelist?"

"What do you think of the method?"

"There's madness in it."

"It has the approval of Karl Geist."

"Praise from Sir Hubert," murmured Mr. Jones.

"Professor Geist declares that if one pursues the circle of perfection, one can not fail to become an all-round player."

"I suspect a witticism."

"Discerning man! I am positive a witticism was intended."

"Why, what has become of all the men?" exclaimed Minerva West, half an hour later. "Flora, dear, won't you run up to Mr. West's den and rout out the deserters. Marjorie Dodd is going to sing again."

Miss Matheson departed on her mission, and, meeting Miss Winston on the way, impressed her into the man-drive. "We may start up one or two," she remarked, as they went up the stair, "though we can't expect to stampede the herd."

The entrance to Addison West's den was fogged with tobacco smoke, through which the recreant males were dimly discernible. Their comfortable attitudes need not be described. You, Sir, know how agreeable it is to sprawl in easy chair or on divan, far from the madding elocutionist or singer, with a glass of Scotch in one hand and a choice Havana in the other. You, Madame, who must sit so stiffly at a musicale, no matter how informal, have often envied your consort—no, not his Scotch and tobacco, Heaven forbid! nor even his recumbent attitude; but the intellectual atmosphere in which he steeps himself. You have sighed, and wished you were one of the party; for beyond question the conversation at such gatherings is of a high order, and stimulating to one's intellectuals.

"Doesn't Van Wart look comfy, though!" whispered Flora, as the girls halted without the den.

In very sooth, as Mr. Jones would say, the soul medium of the music masters was comfortably dis-

posed. He sat Turkwise on a leather couch, one chubby fist clasping a glass of Highland dew, the other a siphon.

"Hist! he speaks!" said Hope.

They tiptoed forward and listened.

"I must have played him for three-quarters of an hour," they heard him say, "until I was cramped in every joint, and there was no more feeling in my hands than in two blocks of wood; and just as I got him within ten feet of the boat I'm damned if he didn't get away!"

From out the fog came murmurs of piscatorial sympathy and a hiss of carbonic water; outside the door a peal of laughter. Churchill Gray rose quickly, the other gentlemen following suit.

"Come in, girls," invited Addison West, putting down a new muskallonge rod he had been exhibiting.

But the girls declined to join the deserters. "We are constabulary of Apollo," Miss Matheson announced, "commanded to fetch you all below stairs, dead or alive."

"Hang Apollo!" cried Van Wart gaily. "I for one refuse to surrender."

"What is the penalty for resisting the constabulary?" inquired Victor Mabbitt.

"They are irresistible," Karl Geist protested.

"We may as well surrender gracefully," said Gray.

"Capitulation, gentlemen," observed the elder West, "suggests that stirring picture, *The Last Round.* Shall we pose it?"

The ammunition bottle circled for the final volley. The devoted little band raised their glasses.

"The fair constabulary!" pledged Gray.

"God bless 'em!" Van Wart added fervently.

The last round was enthusiastically discharged, and the garrison filed out.

Of the delightful fate that waited them below I need only hint. Marjorie Dodd sang several songs; Fannie Skinner was prevailed on to try once more; and Mrs. Romanta Drewl, at the very moment when her friends despaired of persuading her, consented to recite a little something which was voted cute and sweet.

A thoroughly charming evening, every one declared, and none more sincerely than a certain young woman in dove-gray albatross, who rode home swiftly in a carriage, Flora Matheson accompanying her part of the way.

"You were simply bewitching to-night," declared the amiable Flora, with an affectionate pat. "The

men raved about you openly, and the women admired your modesty and reserve. Modesty covers a multitude of charms. Heigh-ho! I wish *I* were a musical genius."

"I wish *I* were, too," Hope echoed.

"Even modesty may be pushed too far," said Flora. "You *are* a musical genius, my dear, and when taxed with it you may as well confess."

"But—what have I done . . ."

"It isn't what you have done, but what you are going to do. That's logic, isn't it?"

"The logic of our sex."

"We should be foolish to try to improve on it. . . . Well, dearie, you have made a good start socially; follow it up. You can't make too many friends."

The young person to whom this dubious advice was given was the subject of a conversation between two gentlemen who were walking homeward.

"By the way," remarked Karl Geist, "I have a new pupil in theory, the beautiful Miss Winston."

"I congratulate the beautiful Miss Winston," said Churchill Gray.

"Erdmann says she is a genius."

"Indeed? And how does Erdmann know?" inquired Gray?

"She may have informed him. Such confidences are not rare."

"I prefer your own conclusion."

"It is a bit early to form one; but I am favorably impressed. She has that peculiar assimilation which genius exhibits. When you tell her to write something you instinctively feel she is going to write it correctly."

"Then I congratulate teacher as well as pupil."

"She is from the country, I understand."

"I believe so. Poor as Job's turkey."

"So? Who, then, pays me six dollars an hour?"

"True; I overlooked that. Very likely I was misinformed."

The subject was not pursued. After a pause Geist resumed: "Young West is extremely attentive to the beautiful Miss Winston."

"I observed as much."

"Our literary friend, Mr. Jones, seems equally smitten with Miss Matheson. It looks like a match."

Gray returned an indifferent affirmative.

They separated as a carriage containing the fair subjects of their colloquy whirled by them.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH A YOUNG GENTLEMAN PRESUMES TO ADVISE A YOUNG LADY

When Leith Maybury sighed and gathered her furs about her (three chapters back), she was thinking, for the thousandth time, how inadequate was her physical equipment to the demands of the concert grand piano. A little strength properly applied will lift a considerable weight, and Mrs. Maybury, scantily dowered with that which nature gives prodigally to many another, had accomplished a great deal in a lifting way; but the great weights were beyond her power, and the thought of it cost her many a tear. Denied the dubious pleasures of a professional career (she had no need of its profits), she cultivated music for her own enjoyment and that of her husband and her friends.

Robert Maybury, though honestly regretful that his wife should have a single desire he was unable to gratify, accepted the decree of fate more cheerfully than she. He was of a domestic turn, and his intimates on the Board of Trade, of which he was a wealthy and influential member, were seldom successful in luring "Bob" Maybury from his own fireside, for which he confessed a foolish fondness. His wife was not domestic in her tastes; by which I mean she lacked nearly all those housewifely attributes which are frankly approved by ninety-nine men and secretly esteemed by the hundredth. Nevertheless, she made a charming home for her devoted Robert, and preferred his society to any other person's. Could the most domestic of women do more?

Maybury's home was on Prospect Boulevard, a few squares from Addison West's mansion, from which it differed as the pearl differs from the diamond in glory. The Maybury residence was furnished simply and in unerring taste, and its evening lights were low and shaded. Into such a picture Mrs. Addison West, with her ancestral ghosts, her noiseless tread and pianissimo voice, would seem to fit exactly; and I count it odd that her own mansion should present a contrast so unpleasing. But an item of this sort in a world of contradic-

tions can appeal but passingly to our surprise or curiosity.

Into the pleasant Maybury environment Miss Winston slipped on Friday afternoon, and she and Enlightenment had a long talk over her "career."

"For you know, my dear," said Mrs. Maybury, "you *were* destined for a career, just as I was not." She sighed for the thousand-and-first time.

Hope gave her a faithful account of her musical doings to date. Some of the details, and the manner in which they were related, amused Mrs. Maybury, who plainly had no exalted opinion of the Colossus.

"I am sorry you might not have had private instruction," she said. "I don't believe in the factory label."

Hope mentioned Professor Geist as an accepted instructional ideal.

"Karl Geist," replied Mrs. Maybury, "is practically a private teacher: the conservatory simply looks after his business; he is such an irresponsible creature that he needs a business guardian."

The "little secret" between Doctor Erdmann and Miss Winston was not disclosed.

"And now," said Mrs. Maybury, opening the grand piano, "let me hear what progress the year has brought."

Hope played at length; and though Mrs. Maybury was a kindlier disposed critic than Herr Beckmesser in the opera, she wrinkled her brow and chalked up more than one mark against her protégée.

"But you have done wonderfully well," she said. "Technically you are as far advanced as is necessary for the present; other things in which you are deficient require attention. One thing you lack, and which you can not acquire too early, is repose. Then, there are a thousand and one little things you must be taught, which even genius can not wholly anticipate. For example, in Bach the mordent is accented on the first note, not the third, as you do it. Suppose you play for me once a week. My criticism may perhaps aid you."

Hope promised gladly and gratefully, not deceived by the delicate way in which instruction was offered. Incidentally she promised herself to disregard a few of the innumerable methods at the conservatory. With Mrs. Maybury to coach her piano work and Karl Geist to teach her musical theory, she felt she was at last in the way of rapid progress.

Shortly after six o'clock Mr. Maybury arrived—a large man, with close-clipped brown beard and soft brown eyes, and the gentlest manner conceivable; a

manner, indeed, which had deceived more than one commercial bucaneer that thought to board an inoffensive merchantman. "The squarest man on the Board of Trade," Bob Maybury was withal one of the most daring and successful. With Maybury, to Miss Winston's surprise, came Churchill Gray. Between the two men existed a mutual regard founded upon appreciation of traits of character admired by each as the possession of the other.

The dinner-hour was one of the most delightful our Princess ever spent. No banquet in Court of Faëry could be more satisfactory than the present appeal to the material senses; no slave of the lamp was better trained than Mrs. Maybury's white-capped maid-servant, or stepped more lightly, or fetched and whisked away a dish with half her grace. As for the conversation, no comparisons may be instituted, as dinner-table conversation forms no feature of fairy tales. The talk was not consciously brilliant. It ranged leisurely through Russian politics and literature, the comparative attractiveness of Rome and Florence for Americans abroad, the Titian newly loaned to the Art Museum, and other subjects which interested Miss Winston profoundly, and on which (despairingly conscious of her limits as a conversa-

tionalist) she refrained from passing an opinion. How much there was to know, outside of music!

Karl Geist arrived in season for the after-dinner coffee. He brought his violin, and at sight of it Hope was reminded of Arthur West's remark: "You know Geist never takes his fiddle with him—simply refuses." Evidently, like Mr. Gray, he made an exception of Mrs. Maybury.

The little company repaired to the music-room. Follow them in, beloved reader, if you wish, but I promise you dull entertainment. For these good people, reasonable enough in other matters, are obsessed by the idea that Johannes Brahms, late of Vienna, wrote some of the most beautiful music in the world; rarely, chastely, reservedly beautiful music; beautiful in line, and mass, and color; music that— But pshaw! I need not remind you who have yawned over his "Academic Overture" and slept through his First Symphony, and who may have estimated his life work by those two compositions,—I need not remind you that Johannes Brahms was a dry, pedantic old chap, whose pages are as destitute of melody as those of Euclid. As once was asked me quaintly: "Why did Brahms write music at all? Why was he not an astronomer?" To which Churchill Gray, or some other amiable Brahms-

ite would probably make answer, that whereas Brahms the astronomer could only bring the stars to us, Brahms the music master takes us to the stars—or very near them.

Pooh! A generation hence you and I would likely echo this extravagance; but, as it happens, we are living in the present, in the best of company, and the music of the present is quite to our liking. Pray, my dear Miss Rubato, let us have a Chopin Nocturne, preferably the one in E-flat—Opus 9, I think it is. . . . Ah-h-h! that is something like music. Could anything be lovelier? How ever fresh the thought, how deathless the melodic beauty! . . . Thank you, and now, if you are quite done sobbing, a Liszt Rhapsody, if you please. And after that a Moszkowski cream-puff, or any other little treasure in your repertory. Dear, dear! I don't know when I have enjoyed a more profitable evening.

Before we turn our backs upon Mrs. Maybury's music-room, we might peep in at the ladies and gentlemen gathered there; for it is always a pleasure to see people enjoying themselves in a seemly manner, though their means of enjoyment be only a table of logarithms.

Mrs. Maybury is at the piano, Brahms' G-major

Sonata for Piano and Violin before her, and Karl Geist with his fiddle-bow is pointing out to Miss Winston, who is looking eagerly over Mrs. Maybury's shoulder, some of the fancied wonders of the second movement, which they have just finished playing, and which they have been requested to repeat by Mr. Gray, who, stretched on a divan, in the dimmest corner of the room, is smoking a cigarette with the air of a man whose soul is steeped in contentment. Mr. Maybury, who shares this peace of the spirit, is smoking a cigar; Professor Geist prefers a brier pipe. The ladies pretend to enjoy the odor of burning tobacco. Dear dissemblers!

"I feel strangely exalted," Hope remarked to Gray. "My feet seem scarcely to touch the earth. That isn't very original, I know."

They were walking homeward in the soft November night, lighted by the moon.

"I share your exaltation in a measure," said Gray; "though I confess that through much hearing of music *my* heels have lost their wings. I don't mean,"—he saw her smile, and anticipated a possible comment —"I don't mean that I listen to music with my heels."

"As most people do."

"Rather let us say that to most people rhythm makes the first appeal."

She approved the euphemism, and they walked a square in silence, Hope thinking of that other night they were together, when she left him, at the door of her lodgings, with her heart full of resentment. How she had "hated" him! (The quotation marks are the present writer's.) What tears she had wept, once free of his cynical presence, vowing she should never, never forgive his thoughtless sneer, his cruel sarcasm!

To-night he had been a paragon of amiability. Whether he believed it or not, he had treated her as one destined for great things. He had begged her, during a lull in the Brahms tempest, to play for him, and had complimented the performance with a simple sincerity that elated her beyond measure. He had lent sympathetic approval to all that Mrs. Maybury suggested for her protégée. No one could be more agreeable than Churchill Gray, it seemed, when he set himself to please. Was it possible that sarcasm or cynicism could ever issue from a mouth so tender and winning? She forgave him his selfish avowal (doubtless Flora exaggerated it) that the price he paid for what he got from feminine society was too high; one

who spent his gold so prodigally deserved something substantial in return.

They discoursed of musicians and programmes, commenting on the monotony which the latter exhibit year on year. It appeared to Hope that an artist might play what she personally liked. Gray was inclined to demur.

"An artist struggling for recognition can not afford to carry personal prejudices into a concert hall. Take our friend Victor Mabbitt for an example. Mabbitt aspires to a concert career. This is dependent on a thousand and one lyceums throughout the country, who engage only persons with a reputation for pleasing the average audience. Hence Mabbitt plays always to the parquet."

"But Madame Friedenthal?"

"Many years of playing to the parquet has done its work even with Madame Friedenthal: applause is the breath of life to her; to what artist is it not? Technic has become the god of her idolatry. Strange, is it not? that artists should forget that technic is not an end but a means."

"This, then, is what I have to look forward to, rashly assuming I shall become an artist."

"As you are to be an artist, you must compromise

between your conscience and the demands of the public. Be warned in time."

"I am. Have you any other advice? I shall accept it gratefully."

"I might add this: strive always for the good opinion of the connoisseurs. Theirs is the only opinion worth the while, theirs the only esteem that abides to the end."

"Thank you. I am in the hands of my friends."

"If I might presume . . ."

"You may."

"You are likely to have too many friends."

Words and tone surprised her.

"My advice, Miss Winston,—unasked in this instance,—is, make as few friends as possible. Friends are a drain upon one's time and energy; sacrifice them to your art."

"That is horribly selfish."

"Art must be selfish."

"Would you sacrifice friends who have helped you to rise?"

"If necessary."

"You make no exception?"

"I can think of no exception."

"Is that not dangerous advice?"

"If the person to whom it is given be not a genius—yes."

"Why the distinction?"

"Because music would gain nothing."

"I see."

She did see, and clearly enough. He was thinking, not of her, but of Art. Her he regarded impersonally, as one set apart by destiny for the further glory of Music. If their relations were such as to include the idea of sacrifice, he would sacrifice even her; it was conceivable he would sacrifice himself. It might be heroic, but it did not appeal to her; she was chilled.

"Thank you," she said. "I shall take your words to heart."

They halted before No. 69 Atwood Street.

"I did not see you at the last Symphony concert," said Hope.

"I was there."

"Your seats must be on the right side of the house."

"On the right side of the house? Oh, yes; on the right side."

Hope did not see his smile, occupied in opening the house door. She turned and gave him her hand.

"Good night. I shall remember all your *good* advice."

"And exercise your private judgment as to following it. Good night."

The door closed after her, and Gray turned back to his own lodgings, a dozen squares south, in a residence of faded gentility.

Since the wreck of his little fortune, through the folly of young Matheson, he had been forced to exercise a rigid economy. He harbored no ill-will toward Flora's brother; he was not without blame himself, having embarked on a precarious enterprise with his eyes wide open. After all, it was no vast sum, and his tastes were not extravagant. Journalism offered him a living pending a rehabilitation of his worldly estate.

It was not much of a living, to be sure; and as the circulation of the *Post* was small, he had to spread himself over several departments. Fortunately, he was allowed a free hand as musical reviewer, otherwise the position would have been intolerable. For he had no patience with charlatanry, insincerity, or the superficial; the spirit of compromise was not in his nature.

He had a few friends, and with these he was content. He might have widened his social circle indefinitely; but as he took his critical work more seriously than his publisher or his readers took it, he thought

it wise to make as few friendships as possible. He had similarly advised Miss Winston, though for a different reason. He knew the game better than she, and he believed that she was in a fair way of wasting valuable time and energy. He believed all he had said to her. And yet . . .

He lighted the lamp in his severely-furnished lodgings, and filled a pipe.

And yet—had he been altogether disinterested in advising Miss Winston to sacrifice her friends to her art? Had he been influenced, in the slightest degree, by the marked attention which Arthur West paid Miss Winston? Was he, in short, more interested in her as a woman than as a musician? The thought troubled him; he really could not answer the question.

Of course he was not in love; when one is in love, one is definitely aware of the fact. He harked back to his brief affair with Flora Matheson. That was the nearest he had come to being in love, and he could not recall that the symptoms then were more pronounced than at present. No; he was not in love; but the situation was dangerous. Happily, he reflected, he had unwittingly safeguarded himself: in advising Miss Winston, inferentially, to eliminate Arthur West, he had eliminated himself as well.

In self-abnegation lay a complete security, from which he might contemplate, unafraid, certain phenomena that had power to disturb the equilibrium of his senses; so long as his lips were sealed he was protected against the possibility of making a fool of himself.

The present hour, vibrant with the manifestations of the phenomena alluded to, was peculiarly fitted for dwelling on them in memory. . . . How like a young poplar was her slender girlish figure, how like a woodland river her voice! What fine eyes she had, and how attractively she dressed her hair; the artist in her showed in many ways. Walking homeward with her in the moonlight, he had noted that her side-face was of classic purity.

The full moon still rode high. Gray extinguished his light and opened the window, by which he sat and smoked until long past midnight. And the humorous upshot of his meditations was: "My words were wasted. She is incapable of sacrificing even a fly."

While she, wakeful in the moonlight, too, was thinking: "Fortunately for Mr. Churchill Gray, he is in love with a girl who would not sacrifice him for all the art in the world."

At least one of them was right.

CHAPTER XVIII

PENUMBRAS OF PROXIMATE EVENTS

As the eyes of the present writer rest on a well-worn copy of "With Rack and Wheel," he can not help thinking what a very different sort of entertainment Mr. Stanley Arthur Jones would have dished up for the good-natured reader of Princess Hope's biography.

Suppose (a thing impossible, but suppose) Hope Winston had been one of Mr. Jones's ethereal heroines, instead of a substantial young woman from the provinces. What an exciting life she would have led in the few months following her migration southward! Instead of the unromantic environment in which we have seen her, and the sedate adventures that fell to

her lot, she would have passed before us on a highly-colored panorama of palaces and gardens, inns and stage-coaches, lonely highways and deserted châteaux; instead of the decorous music of strings and wood-wind, her progress would have been accompanied by the stirring music of crossed rapiers, popping muskets, jingling spurs and thudding hoofs. Men would have sighed for her, died for her; perhaps an empire or two would have tottered—who knows?—empires *have* tottered on as little provocation, in the brave pages of romance.

To match this, what have we had? The good-natured reader knows. So, premising his consent, which it is impossible he should refuse, I shall pass lightly over some five months of my heroine's history, briefly indicating such incidents and associations as exerted a formative influence on her swiftly-shaping character.

Well, then, to begin with, she completely disregarded Churchill Gray's advice concerning friends, and instead of making as few as possible, made as many; or perhaps it would be more just to the young lady to say that she made no effort to avoid the many pleasant folk who came her way. Whether she would have acted wisely in pursuing the opposite course I

decline to say; whether she was incapable, as Gray surmised, of sacrificing on Music's altar even a blue-bottle fly, remains to be seen. At present I note that for some five months she lived a most agreeable existence, and was referred to in this or that music lover's drawing-room as the beautiful Miss Winston, the talented Miss Winston, the charming and popular Miss Winston, and (I am happy to add) the modest and reserved Miss Winston.

When a young person possessing quick wits, humor, and the artistic temperament is suddenly released from the bonds (however tender) of a commonplace consanguinity, and precipitated by chance into the society of men and women who live a strenuous life of culture, it is not remarkable that she should feel an exaggerated pleasure in their company, and think each goose a swan; nor that she should lack perspective and that nice perception of values which flowers no faster than ourselves. Brought unpreparedly in contact with that for which one's secret soul has hungered, there seems no limit to our appetency and our capacity for assimilation. We take in good and bad alike, never doubtful of the one, never certain of the other: Time, the great winnower, will attend to that. So while Hope gathered a great quantity of chaff,

some grain was gathered, too, which is as much as the most of us can say.

She did not neglect her music. To that she gave each forenoon and a share of each afternoon; and such was her progress, it is enough to note that even impatient self was satisfied. She attended every concert holding promise of enlightenment, and still had time to play at butterfly; and while it is possible that the hours given to social pleasure might better have gone to the reading of profitable books, her conscience was untroubled, as nineteen's conscience ought to be.

A pupil of Karl Geist, it was impossible not to make progress. Hope did not know how much time and sympathy he gave to other students; in her own case the value of his services was out of all proportion to his tuition fee. He instructed her in theory—not by book, but in a way peculiarly his own; in addition (and this was not nominated in the bond), he coached her piano playing, criticizing it phrase by phrase; he taught her little "tricks" of artistry, the thousand and one small things which, as Mrs. Maybury said, even genius could not wholly anticipate; he played duets with her; he informed and stimulated her in other ways.

The old-fashioned idea, he told her, was to practise

five hours; the new idea is to practise one hour and think five times as hard. He showed her how, in taking up a new composition for study, to strip it of its details, and familiarize herself first with the harmonic skeleton; how to seek in each phrase the one indispensable note, without which the phrase is meaningless; how, by holding the pedal through a tone mass, to give to it a significance lacking in a clearer-cut presentment.

He would play on his violin a page or so, bidding her note the variety given to the melody; she must never play a phrase twice alike, never exactly reproduce an effect, however felicitous. It was an excellent idea, he said, always to keep in mind how a violinist would present the melody. Her "hour" in his studio frequently extended to two.

Since she aspired to play Brahms, he frankly suggested that she disregard the methods of the Colossus, and he indicated in detail the technic required to the performance of Brahms, who was first of all a poet. He advised her, above all, to devote herself unflaggingly to Bach.

"Bach," he said, "is the music of the future; he is the one immortal." Snatching up his violin, he played a few measures, and cried: "Is there any-

thing written to-day more modern? Is there anything to outlive that passage?"

Karl Geist, as had been said of him, was not a musician—he was music. Though less than forty, there seemed nothing in music he did not comprehend, and nothing good in it he did not enjoy; he had no prejudices. Among musicians the country over he was known and respected; the public heard little of him.

Mrs. Maybury, also, instructed and encouraged the neophyte, but neither she nor Geist flattered her, nor expressed a positive belief in her ultimate triumph. "That was pretty well done," Mrs. Maybury would remark, at the conclusion of a bit of Bach; or, "You are coming along," Geist would say; and even this small praise was not often forthcoming. Never certain of her own genius, she doubted more often than she believed. The playing of third-rate pianists filled her with despair; should she ever be able to equal their dazzling performances? What if, after all, she failed of greatness! She never let her mind dwell long on this maddening possibility.

Aside from the musical progress of our Princess, perhaps the most significant episode in the few months we are passing over was the assiduous court paid to her by Arthur West. It is only fair to the young

gentleman to say that toward this, his first serious affair of the heart, he discovered an enthusiasm fully equal to that in which he took up his newest vocal method; and this was enthusiasm's ultimate word. No possible exception could be taken to the manner of his wooing. It assumed the form of a fluid friendship, in which swam the molecules of a tenderer sentiment, requiring for their crystallizing only the magic touch of Circumstance. The neglect of Circumstance to stretch forth a coöperating hand must seem suspicious, when we consider that the young people were much in each other's company. Was Miss Winston aware of the young man's precarious footing on the precipice's brow? I think likely. Did she enjoy watching his exercises in equilibrium? I think unlikely. I fancy she was uneasy for him, as you or I would be for some foolish person walking a tight-rope over Niagara. Arthur lost his balance just once: he mentioned something about a temperamental affinity. (You are requested not to smile at this; the young lady refrained.) Hope met the suggestion with an inquiry as to Arthur's latest vocal method, and learned, as she was prepared to, that the latest was the ideal.

"We know," explained Arthur, "that the tone is produced by the tension of the vocal cords. As these

cords are small, we should give them all the assistance possible; so while singing, the whole body must be tense, that *all* the strain may not come on the vocal cords—or something of that sort."

"The very method for the statue music in 'Don Juan'," remarked Hope; and in the amusement which this and kindred suggestions evoked, the dangerous point of temperamental affinity was skirted.

Over Hope's piano now hung the picture of Brahms that had long stood in the art shop window—a Christmas gift, a genuine surprise evoking an exclamation of delight. No card or penciled name of donor was inclosed: the picture was the gift of the same good fairy who supplied concert tickets. These had come in abundance; not only tickets for the Symphony concerts, but for other concerts of significance, and for art exhibitions and lectures. Sometimes they were stamped "Complimentary"; sometimes there was one, sometimes two, on which occasions Madame Jesurin was invited to go along. When there were two tickets they always called for the parquet seats J 89 and 90; and it was a curious circumstance that when only one ticket was sent, J 89 was never occupied. This seat must be sold, for there were concerts when every other chair on the lower floor was occupied.

The most plausible theory was that J 89 belonged to the good fairy, who wished to preserve his bounty a secret; and what doubt Hope might have had concerning the identity of the good fairy was dispelled one night, when she observed Doctor Erdmann in the line of standers behind the parquet rail. She did not pause, at the time, to reflect that even so disinterestedly benevolent a gentleman as Doctor Rudolf Erdmann would hardly stand through a season's concerts in order to hide his kindly light under a bushel; she was impelled toward him with words of gratitude on her lips. He saw her approaching, bowed formally, and, turning abruptly, engaged a gentleman at his side in conversation. The light remained busheled.

Curled up in her easy-chair, an April morning, Hope's eyes wandered from the vaseful of royal roses (the gift of her discreet adorer) to the picture of Brahms, and her thoughts flew to Churchill Gray, as more than once they had similarly flown. Poor Mr. Gray! Did he miss the picture and wonder what had become of it? For some months she had seen very little of Gray. One or two occasions promised a conversation, but he seemed purposely to decline it. Was he displeased with her because she did not turn ascetic, immure herself in her hermitage, and flog her piano

mercilessly? All work and no play makes Jill as dull as Jack. As long as she did not slight her music, what possible harm in playing butterfly out of study hours? what possible good in "sacrificing" agreeable friends, who perhaps were not so intellectual as the critic to the *Post*, and did not take music quite so seriously?

She acknowledged having rather overdone of late the rôle of butterfly. She had been out every night for a week back, to opera, musicale and play; in each instance until a late hour, as supper always followed the entertainment. Last evening, in company with Flora Matheson, Mr. Jones and Arthur, she had gone "slumming," occupying a box in a cheap theater famous for its melodrama "thrillers." Toward the close of the performance the theater caught fire, and the box-party executed a hurried exit via Stageland. As if this were not sufficient excitement for one evening, they visited a Chinese restaurant, and supped on a queer assortment of Eastern dishes; and to-day Miss Winston was entertaining her first headache. Was it the excitement—or the "gamgott"?

Atop all this, Mrs. Addison West had planned for her dear young friends, the Misses Matheson and Winston, another strenuous afternoon and evening.

This included looking in on the Pekoe Club, dining at a smart café, and attending Madame Friedenthal's annual recital.

"Do butterflies ever have headaches?" wondered Hope, pressing her hands against her temples.

She glanced languidly about her lodgings. They did not seem so agreeable as when first her eyes rested on them. How out of place Arthur's roses looked! If flowers have souls, these proud beauties must have felt deeply humiliated. How tawdry the room's furnishings in the white light of day! And what a smelly house!—almost every day the ghosts of the boiled cabbages welcomed another of the spookish brethren. She felt sure they distressed Arthur, who, on German or French night, took tea with her and Madame Jesurin, sometimes in one apartment, sometimes in the other. And last week, when Doctor Erdmann called (yes; the president of the Colossus actually paid her that honor. He was—er—passing through that part of town)—on that occasion the spectral cabbages held a rout, frisking about the hall and chasing one another through cracks and key-holes, so that there was no blinking their unpleasant proximity. She felt no shame of her narrow means; but she wondered whether one might not live economically in rooms to which one

might invite one's female friends, and not feel impelled to throw open the windows.

How tinny her piano had grown—or was it always so strident-voiced? Doctor Erdmann had remarked the piano. He sat to it and struck a few chords, and said: "You should have a better instrument, Miss Winston." Her reply: "It does well enough to practise on." His amiable protest: "No piano is too good for you to practise on." The incident closed with his offer to place a "Colossus" piano at her service whenever she was minded to request it.

And what a bore Madame Jesurin had become, with her frequent references to her departed spouse (who must have been a miracle of patience); her chronic habit of borrowing a cup of sugar, or tea, or something else, and neglecting to return it; her raptures upon everything under heaven, from currant buns to Wagner; her pretenses to culture, exposed by the most ludicrous "breaks." Decidedly, a change of base would not be unwelcome.

At this critical juncture Madame Jesurin drifted in with a request for the temporary loan of an egg. Driven to resolution, Hope snatched up her hat and set out for the conservatory, finally to accept the proffered services of Doctor Erdmann in selecting a de-

sirable boarding-place. As she left the house she met Mrs. Grady, returning from some errand of benevolence, and the good-hearted soul glanced at her so fondly that she hesitated.

If, as Monsieur Maeterlinck tells us, Instinct and Destiny are for ever conferring together, the fateful pair must have exchanged a smile when Hope, conquering hesitation, went on to the conservatory. Yet, as she drew near to it resolution sickened, and positive misgiving seized her when she boarded the elevator. She would have welcomed any interruption of her purpose, however trivial.

"Third," she said, as the elevator man closed the gate behind his passengers.

"This is express," he replied, rather less surlily than usual.

"Let me out then, please," she requested hastily, with a little sigh of relief.

Instead, the man shot the car to the third floor, and threw the gate open graciously.

As Hope advanced toward Doctor Erdmann's office, Rhoda Weathers left a descending car and followed her. They halted, face to face, at the door.

Rhoda, pale of face, tense, laid a hand challengingly on the door-knob, and Hope, her eyes drawn to

the hand by the movement, had her third glimpse of the cabochon emerald ring, now on Rhoda's finger.

They looked into each other's eyes, and for a breathless moment two souls questioned each other; the one gently, wonderingly, the other clamantly, hostilely.

Mystified, hurt, and lacking words to break the awkward silence, Hope drooped her head and turned away.

Her impulse checked by circumstance, she was satisfied to defer her interview with Doctor Erdmann. As she went slowly down the stairs she reviewed her relations with Rhoda Weathers for some explanation of the latter's attitude toward her in recent weeks,—an attitude that had passed from indifference to coolness, from coolness to unveiled hostility. Only one explanation suggested itself.

Miss Weathers had long enjoyed the distinction of being Professor Geist's favorite pupil, and rumor (with the tongue of Arthur West) reported that he was interested in her in more ways than one. Was Rhoda jealous of Miss Winston's popularity with the teacher? How absurd!

It would be of no use to question Miss Matheson: Flora did not pretend to understand Rhoda. They possessed nothing in common except the fact that they

had been college mates at Smith, and came from the same city.

It is human nature to desire the good opinion of one's acquaintances. To be misunderstood by the least of these is pain. Hope returned to Atwood Street wounded in spirit and perturbed by vague forebodings of distress to come.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH OUR PRINCESS TURNS OVER A NEW LEAF

As president of the Social Dynamics Club and as composer of innumerable songs, Mrs. Addison West was naturally an honored member of the Pekoe Club, to which (it being her week to provide the light refreshments) she brought a colored maid, the refreshments aforesaid and her dear young friends, the Misses Matheson and Winston.

As we shall tarry at the Pekoe Club less than an hour, a brief reference to its purpose and constituency will suffice.

The Pekoe Club was made up of clever people who expressed their souls in painting, music, architecture, literature and journalism, or other intellectual voca-

tion. Eligibility to membership implied having "done something" in one's chosen calling; a net through which sifted, with equal facility, Ernest Penwell, the distinguished novelist, and Atchison S. Fay, the distinguished passenger agent; Madame Friedenthal, the famous pianist, and "old lady Keith," the famous dowager.

The Pekoe had no board of management, or by-laws, or even club-room of its own. Its members gathered weekly, for mutual appreciation and a cup of tea, in the studio of Raphael Pree, on the skylight "octave" of the Beaux Arts Temple. Should you object that Pekoe is a frivolous name for such a league of intellect, I reply with Charter Member Penwell, who suggested the name, that the light fantastic title of the club served to accentuate its underlying seriousness of purpose (which was well understood by the members), besides piquing the curiosity of Philistia.

"If," remarked Penwell quaintly, "Philistia ask you, 'What is the purpose of the Pekoe Club?' you answer, 'To brew an urn—a Grecian urn—of tea: that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' Besides, the leaves of Pekoe give tone and perfume to the commonest of teas; I forbear the simile."

At four o'clock the studio of Raphael Pree was pre-

pared to receive the brotherhood. Not a brush, or palette, or other artist tool was visible; there was none of that Bohemian disorder which some persons affect to admire. Mrs. West's party was among the first to arrive, as Flora was to pour; and the girls had opportunity to charge themselves with the atmosphere of the studio, and to admire its really artistic decorations, prior to the influx of the Pekoe brethren.

Early in the hour Hope found herself seated under an excellent copy of a Frans Hals portrait, in conversation with Ernest Penwell, whose "works" (she had read *one* of them) she greatly admired. Penwell told her the names of the club members, and answered all her questions with engaging frankness.

Yes; it was true that, to become a Pekoite, one must "do something" to distinguish one from the hurrying crowd in the street below.

"For example: that romantic-looking young man with the brown mustache, leaning over Miss Matheson's chair. . . ."

"Oh, I know Mr. Jones," said Hope. "Tell me, who is the lady in the green and red portière?"

"The Marquise de Crème, who conducts the *Post's* cosmetic column. She gets *all* her gowns at the upholsterer's."

"And the lady in the pink hat and purple waist? She just gave me a look which said plainly: 'What business have *you* here? Pray, what have *you* done?' "

"The pink hat? Oh!" He mentioned the name, adding: " 'That singular anomaly, the lady novelist,' who is anything but an anomaly these days."

"And that serious-faced girl with whom she is talking?"

"Has published two books, and is hard at work on a third. She rarely takes a holiday of this sort; she says she can not spare the time from her literary work."

"Why, she can't be more than twenty!" Hope exclaimed.

"Eighteen, I believe. Such industry! Such seriousness! Oh dear!" Penwell fetched a sigh from ironic depths.

"I feel myself dwindling," said Hope, "like Alice when she drank from the magic bottle."

"Gracious! let me get you the counteracting cake—and a cup of tea!" Penwell danced away.

Two ladies halted before Hope, to admire the Frans Hals over her head. Remarked one of the pair: "I think that is Mr. Pree's most original canvas, don't you?" Was it irony? Probably not.

Hope was observing the pale face of the strenuous young novelist, who could no more spare time to play than Atlas could, and musing: "*She* has done something. *She* does not play the butterfly. *She* earns her headaches." Hope passed a hand wearily across her forehead.

Suddenly she became conscious that Churchill Gray was fixedly regarding her. He had been talking with a musical lion from Boston, whom a lady member of the club was proudly displaying. The lion being led away, to roar in another corner, Gray made as if to join Miss Winston; but Penwell returned at the moment with the tea and cake, and Gray joined the little group that circled the Goddess of the Urn. Flora was a great favorite at pouring parties.

Hope's eyes followed him, and she thought: "What a springy, graceful walk! What a serious, beautiful face! Mr. Jones appears insipid beside him. How *can* Flora flirt so with that coxcomb!"

A question from Penwell reminded her of that gentleman's existence.

"Madame Friedenthal?" she murmured. "Oh, yes; I expect to hear her to-night. I understand she is a Pekoite—or should it be Pekonian? Do you see her here often?"

"Very rarely," said Penwell. "She is another of those who can not spare time from their work. At this moment she is probably in bed, resting against the task of the night."

"And what a pleasant task!"

"One would think so. Yet I have her private word for it that she gets no pleasure from her music. She is always working, always thinking; hour on hour striving to produce this and that elusive effect. It is pathetic."

"You don't mean that."

"Well, then, I don't," he replied amiably. "No; there is only one path to Parnassus, and there are no tea-gardens along the way. Beware!" he added with exaggerated gravity.

"I will!" said Hope, and the note of sudden decision in her voice brought a quick glance from Penwell, who was hardly expected to guess that his lightly-spoken word had produced an effect where the earnest adjuration of Churchill Gray had failed.

But then, five months had passed, and the young lady had a headache.

After a leisurely dinner, Mrs. Addison West and her dear young friends, accompanied by the junior

West and Mr. Jones, proceeded to Apollo Hall, in which a great crowd was gathering.

"Fuzzy-looking lot, aren't they?" Arthur remarked to Hope.

"A lot of interesting faces," she replied. "I feel like asking this one and that: 'Well, what do *you* play?' "

"All the scramblers are here to-night with their Beethoven books and pencils," said Arthur. "They'll all play like Friedenthal to-morrow."

He nodded to the Jesurin, across the aisle. Madame had come on the good fairy's ticket, which Hope had no use for.

The hall's seating capacity was soon exhausted, and chairs were placed on the stage, until there remained only a small clearing for the piano and a lane for the pianist.

"What a wonderful gift, the power to draw all these people!" said Hope. "How smiling and happy Madame Friedenthal must be at this moment, if she is peeping through that door."

"Don't you believe it," said Arthur. "She is keeping away from that door, and fidgeting around as nervous as ten witches. It's an awful strain, the hour before a concert, she tells me."

"You know Madame Friedenthal personally?" Hope was interested.

"Oh, yes." He acknowledged the privilege in a matter-of-fact way.

"Is she interesting? Of course she is."

"Well,"—Arthur pursed his lips and wrinkled his brow,—"with one brilliant exception, I can't say I really enjoy the society of musical geniuses."

"Oh, every one enjoys Karl Geist's society," she smiled.

Arthur acknowledged the parry with a grimace. "Would you like to meet Madame Friedenthal?"

"I can not tell you how much."

"We'll go behind after the concert. You won't have a chance to say any more than 'I enjoyed your playing so much.' It's a regular bargain-counter rush, and usually there are fifteen or twenty relations all trying to kiss her at once. But maybe you'll be able to squeeze in a hand-shake. *Ei! Ei!*" he cried mockingly, "there's Church Gray beside Madame Jesurin. I love Beethoven. Don't you, Miss Winston?"

Hope hid a convulsed face in her programme.

"I perfectly adore Brahms!" the irreverent youth pursued. "Brahms is so deep, so intellectual! What luck some people have in drawing seats."

"Madame Jesurin, for example," said Hope, who was thinking that but for Mrs. West's little party she might be sitting beside Churchill Gray, in place of Madame.

Arthur's reply was smothered in a burst of applause. Madame Friedenthal had entered and was tripping down the lane.

The programme made no great demand on the intelligence of the audience. It comprised a Beethoven Sonata; "Funeral March," Chopin (by request); Valse, Chopin; Etude, Moszkowski (by request); Etudes-Symphoniques, Schumann; "A la Bien-Aimée," Schütt (by request); Etude, Henselt (by request); Gavotte and Musette, D'Albert (by request); and a Liszt Polonaise, which no one had thought to request.

An ideal programme, which you, my dear Miss Rubato, who aim to please, would do well to study. Always begin with Bach and Beethoven, to which everybody will listen politely, and conclude with Liszt, to which everybody will listen delightedly; Chopin and Schumann group in the middle, an 'owski or two on each side, and you are "all set," as the printers say.

While Madame Friedenthal played the Beethoven Sonata, Hope gave her mind so completely to the mu-

sic, that Flora whispered to Mr. Jones: "Look at Miss Winston: she's in a trance." Yet, in spite of her absorption, she was thinking how differently the pianist had impressed her five months before. Madame Friedenthal had remained the same; it was Hope who had changed. Now she was able to give music her attention, whereas formerly she gave it only her emotions; then she listened ecstatically, now esthetically. And in this mental activity, which denied not a single sense impression, she found a keener, more abiding pleasure than in that unconditional surrender of the intellect which, not long ago, the first chord of a symphony compelled.

Her appreciation of the pianist increased correspondingly. Madame appeared less wonderful, but more admirable. The present Beethoven Sonata was one which Hope was able to give a good account of; but how paltry seemed her own performance beside Madame Friedenthal's perfect artistry; scarcely a measure that could be set against it. That technic! was it inexplicable? That technic which concealed itself, which could give an effect of artless simplicity to a turn or trill; which could take half a dozen tones and so color them that one almost cried out in delight; was that genius alone? No; it was genius plus work,

unremitting toil. This mature woman, who ranked among the few great pianists of the world, had worked and still worked as Hope never had done. That simple little turn of five tones had cost her as much time and thought as Hope often gave to an entire composition; that octave scale passage, which she glided over so lightly, represented days of drudgery.

Hope's enjoyment of the final number was submerged by a wave of humiliation and self-censure. Her unworthiness to aspire to stand beside Madame Friedenthal stood naked. Gray was right, Penwell was right: there is only one path to Parnassus, and there are no tea-gardens along the way. She, who had fancied herself well up the slope, was playing butterfly among the flowers at the foot of it.

"A penny for your thoughts," whispered Arthur West.

She started, then looked at him as if she were for the first time setting eyes on him.

"You would repent the bargain," she said quietly.

He felt the change in her manner, and, discreetly holding his tongue, began to gather up her wraps. The slight restraint upon their amity was removed by a young woman behind them, who remarked to her companion: "Miss Lynch played at a concert for

charity where the tickets were a hundred dollars each. She plays cross-hand pieces."

Hope flashed a mirthful glance at Arthur, and the mercurial youth beamed again.

"Shall we go behind and congratulate Madame Friedenthal?" he suggested.

She signified her readiness, and they joined the little crowd of worshipers behind-scenes.

Viewed at close range, Madame Friedenthal was seen to be a tense little woman, with a most interesting face, now pale and drawn from the strain of the performance. She was very short-sighted, and looked peeringly into each new face that came before her. As Arthur predicted, there was opportunity only to "squeeze in a hand-shake," but that was something. Hope was thrilled by the touch of the steely fingers, eloquent beyond words. She stammered something about "a privilege and an inspiration," then gave place to a pushing female relative of Madame Friedenthal's, who embraced the pianist cooingly.

When they rejoined Mrs. West's little party, supper was proposed by Mr. Jones, but Miss Winston begged to be excused, pleading a headache. Arthur summoned a carriage, and as he accompanied her to it he remarked: "Shall we see you to-morrow night?"

"Thank you, Arthur, but I think not. My butterfly existence ends to-night."

"The deuce!" he exclaimed. "You're not going to take the veil?"

"I am going to turn over a new leaf."

"Don't. Old things are best: old wine, old friends, old leaves . . ."

"I must not idle any more. I must devote *all* my time to music."

"But"—dejectedly—"what is to become of me? Am I never to see you?"

"Shall you continue your language lessons?"

"To be sure," he cried, brightening. "Henceforth, excepting Tuesday and Friday, my calendar is blank paper."

"What a wicked waste of time! Good night, Arthur."

"Adieu, most beautiful of hermits."

He closed the carriage door, and returned disconsolate to his friends.

CHAPTER XX

"LOVE IN THE VALLEY"

Princess Hope threw open the window, and spring came in, as it entered the hut of Hunding.

The air was clean and sweet, with a tang of stirring mold. The sky was cloudless, the sunlight golden; the south breathed faintly. A lilac bush across the way yielded its odor to the drawing sun; the buds of a maple before the house disclosed, almost perceptibly, their plicate green.

We say one morning, "It is spring!" And thoughts wake as wake the maple buds; and all that is sweet within us exhales, as odor from the lilac.

The smell of earth sent Hope's thoughts flying northward; to a land where spring comes slowly, as

in the land of Christabel. In her happy valley, though May Day was within cry, the spell of the frost, she knew, was not yet exorcised: the snow yet lingered in the coverts of the gorge; ice edged the wayward little river and lurked in the swamp-land. Thither Spring, with laggard steps, was journeying. Her guise in towns was not her guise in woods, but the voice was one—faintly, alluringly, insistently calling.

Hope shut her piano, and put away the leaves of Mendelssohn and Wagner. These but told of spring: Spring itself was out of doors. The day was Sunday; all the town was abroad; the parks were filled with merrymakers.

Through one of these oases wandered Hope, sapful as the greening trees, throbbing with life, stirred by strange sweet longings—amorphous, unrealized desires. Her senses were gladdened by the sunshine, by earthy odors, by the red of the robin's breast, the blue of the bluebird's wing, the green of the springing grass, the silver of the still lagoon. An unwonted tenderness merged her with the crowd that streamed along the park walks and spread over the lawns. She smiled upon a shabby old gentleman sitting disconsolate on a bench, and he revived perceptibly. She picked up a bawling urchin who had fallen from his

tricycle, and sent him dry-eyed upon his way. She bought a taffied apple for a ragged little chick who was looking wistfully at the vender's wares; and picking up another tot, with a "Don't *you* want to ride, too?" she set her on the back of a donkey magnificently caparisoned.

Soon she was too happy longer to remain in and of the crowd. Her exaltation demanded seclusion, scarcely to be found in a city park on Sunday: one might as well seek covert on the boulevard. She set her face homeward, when suddenly she descried a young man stretched at length upon a slope above an arm of the lagoon. One hand, thrust through his hair, supported his head, the other held an open book.

Surely an interesting book. He read steadily, undisturbed even by a noisy boating party that passed below him. Presently he put down the book, and sat up to light a cigarette. As he glanced around he observed a young woman standing near; an exuberant young woman, who had restrained an impulse to steal up behind him, clap her hands over his eyes, and cry out: "Guess who?"

"Please don't get up," said Hope: "I will sit down instead. The grass is dry?"

"Perfectly. The sun is hot as midsummer's."

Gray spread out his light overcoat, and Hope accepted a corner of it. "Now, please light your cigarette," she said. "Do you come here often?"

"Rarely; never on Sundays—until to-day. The spring drove me out. The feel of the grass, even this sophisticated sward, is refreshing."

"You look tired. You have been working too hard."

"I think not. I shall be going away before long."

"To your north country?"

"Yes. The music season is about done for. You, too, will be going north, I suppose."

"I am in no need of a vacation."

"You are looking well."

He added to himself that never had she looked so radiant as on this April morning, so like a young goddess of the vernal season.

"If I felt any better I should be unable to contain myself," she averred truthfully.

"A summer in town will test your vivacity," he warned her, "and you will have a dull time of it: your friends will be away."

"I shall not miss them. Friends are a drain on one's time and energy. A wise man said that."

Was she mocking him? Her eyes were very mirthful. Gray's face shadowed. "The wise man knows

himself to be a fool," he quoted, and looked across the lagoon.

"And the fool doth think she is wise," she rejoined, paralleling his gaze.

Gray turned his steady eyes on her face. It grew warm under the scrutiny, and her heart throbbed as it throbbed that night in Music Hall when first their glances met.

"How are your studies progressing?" he asked.

"Very well. Do you know, my small affairs have always monopolized our conversations."

"That is as it should be, I think."

"And I think not. You have never told me a thing about yourself. Won't you begin now?"

"There is nothing to tell," he answered, his eyes still on her face.

"But there *must* be," she insisted, and so positively that both laughed, she somewhat constrainedly. For all at once she knew that she loved the man beside her, that she always should love him, and that the most trivial item of his past, the smallest plan or promise of his future, was precious to her.

"There must be," she repeated tremulously. "You have done things and thought things; you have dislikes and preferences. . . ."

"My favorite gem is the diamond; my favorite flower, the double nasturtium; my favorite poet, Owen Meredith—" The hurt look in her eyes stopped him.

"Some one told me you were writing a play," she said.

"A poor thing, but mine own."

"Won't you tell me about that?"

"I am not yet able to tell myself about it. It is still in the nebulous stage."

"Is it a comedy or a tragedy?"

"A comedy—which, with 'the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.'"

"You are provokingly uncommunicative . . . except on one subject—your north country. Since you told me about your Lake of Dreams I have wondered often how it looks."

"You know as well as I."

"Perhaps our mental images agree. I can see on the south shore a tiny pine-covered promontory, sloping gently to the water's edge—just the place for your camp."

Gray smiled. "I hope to find just such a spot, though I doubt the pine; more likely birch and balsam. I shall send you a description of it."

"Will you? . . . I shall try not to be disappointed if you forget."

"I do not forget so easily. Besides, was it not you who gave the lake its name?"

"Subject to your approval."

"No other name is now possible—except, perhaps, Lake Hope."

This, his first pronouncement of her Christian name, produced a sweet disorder in her senses. When she could trust herself to speak again, she said:

"May I see the book you are reading?"

He gave it to her.

"'Poems' by George Meredith. You mentioned Owen."

"On second thought I prefer George."

"I have read one or two of his books. Do you consider him the greatest English novelist?"

"I should not assert that. But I get more out of him."

"You ought to know: you are a critic."

"Oh,"—a shrug, "I don't pretend to be a critic; I am too impressionistic."

"There are impressionists and critics, then?"

"And enraptured amateurs."

She turned the leaves of the book.

"I suppose this is difficult reading," she said with some hesitation.

"Difficulties are desired. There comes a time when the obvious no longer satisfies."

"I suppose so. . . . What does this mean?" She read a few lines, and added: "Descriptive notes by Doctor Dudelsack might make it clear." Then she put the book in his hands, saying: "Please read me your favorite poem."

"It is rather too long," said Gray; "but I will read a stanza from another poem. Do you fancy this?

" 'Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.
Deals she an unkindness, 'tis but her rapid measure,
Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.' "

While he read Hope thought: "What pretty hair he has!" and wished she might stretch out a hand and smooth it. That being out of the question, she furtively stroked the coat he had spread for her; it was part of him.

"Please read me your favorite poem" *Page 256*

"Andante cantabile," was her comment when he looked up from the page. "And who was the heartless She?"

"A rustic maiden. The poem is titled 'Love In the Valley'."

"Love In the Valley," she repeated. "What magic there is in certain words—valley, for one."

"Sesame, for another," he suggested.

"And Camelot."

"And Samarcand, 'that name of names.' "

She thrilled to his voice, her cup of exaltation brimming.

He passed to the following page, saying: "This is my favorite stanza. For absolute beauty I know of nothing in English that surpasses it:

" 'Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.' "

"It is very beautiful," murmured Hope unsteadily.

He shifted to a more comfortable position, and his

coat-sleeve brushed her arm. At the contact she drew back, frightened, trembling. She felt as one who, standing on a high place, has desire to spring into the void. Had he thrown down the book at that moment and held out his arms, she would have made the leap.

Instead, he passed to another page, and read:

"'A wind sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.
The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;
And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.'"

He misinterpreted her deep-drawn breath. The moment of passion had spent itself, the danger was by. She smiled—moist-eyed, but inwardly controlled and outwardly calm.

"It is beautiful as the music of Brahms," she said.

"They are not unlike," he agreed; "and I think I

should add another—Browning. . . . Would you like to take the book?"

"Thank you, yes. And—I think I will walk a bit now."

He sprang up and gave her a hand.

That night, sometime between midnight and dawn, Princess Hope woke from a beautiful dream with a name on her lips; a dream of two in a valley—twilight, rose-flush, the lark above the flowers.

She put out a hand in the dark, and, taking a book from a stand beside the bed, she laid it against her throat.

CHAPTER XXI

CONTAINING THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL LETTERS

Hope had finished her weekly letter to her mother, and was composing another for Alice Winston's delectation.

This, like all her communications to her little sister, took the form of a fairy tale, and related the adventures of a young person named Dolores, who, after traveling east of the sun and west of the moon and north of the polar star, came unto the kingdom of Heart's Desire, where dwelt the handsomest, the most amiable prince in all the world. Dolores fell instantly in love with him, which was a piece of ill luck, for the Prince was already loved by Princess Radia, of his court, who was ever so much more attractive than

Dolores; besides, the astrologers had foretold that he would wed Princess Radia, and they would live happily ever afterward. While Dolores was lamenting this sad state of affairs, for which nobody in particular was to blame, an old woman suddenly appeared before her, and asked: "Why do you weep, my child?" "I weep," replied Dolores, "because the Prince of the Heart of Gold is to wed the beautiful Princess Radia." "Be of good cheer," said the old woman; "that is easily prevented. I am a powerful fairy, and am disposed to help you; for one day, when I was very thirsty, you gave me a cup of water with your own pretty hands, little thinking that your kind deed would bring you good luck." "Alas!" said Dolores, "I fear there is nothing you can do to help me." "Tut! tut!" said the fairy. "I will change Princess Radia into a mouse, or an owl, or anything else you please; that will settle *her*." But Dolores shook her head. "Oh, no," said she; "I am very fond of Princess Radia, and not for the world would I have anything happen to her. I am afraid you can not be of any assistance." "Pshaw!" returned the fairy. "All is fair in love. Suppose, then, that I change the Prince into a swineherd. After you have married him I can change him back again." "Oh,

dear, no!" cried Dolores. "I would not have him the least bit different from what he now is. Really, there is nothing you can do to mend matters." "Bosh!" exclaimed the fairy impatiently. "I have it!—I will change *you* into the most beautiful princess in all the world. Every day you will grow prettier; every time you open your mouth a piece of gold will fall out; and the Prince will marry you on sight." But Dolores a third time shook her head. "Thank you very much," she said, "but I believe I would rather remain as I am. One should not sacrifice one's individuality even to wed a prince." "Oh, very well," grumbled the fairy. "If I can not change one thing into another my fairy occupation is gone, and I might as well go with it." Saying which she promptly vanished, like all unappreciated opportunities. . . . This tale teaches us, children, that we should give a cup of water to every thirsty old lady we meet; also, that there are some things which can not be helped, even by fairies.

Hope smiled when she finished the tale, sighed when she sealed the letter. It was an outlet for her own emotions, and it would have no other than a surface meaning for her little sister. There are many pages writ with heart's blood which possess no deeper sig-

nificance for the casual reader. Nor was it purposed that they should.

Madame Jesurin, coming in a little later with a wonderful tale about Mazdaznan, a new religious cult, found Miss Winston engrossed in a book.

"Something new, *Schätzchen?*" she queried. If it were, she intended borrowing it.

"'Poems' by George Meredith," Hope replied, closing the book, but with a finger between the leaves.

"*Ja*, Meredith!" exclaimed Madame. "I love Meredith! 'Lucile' is grand. And 'Aux Italiens!' she quoted the opening stanza.

Hope thought it quite unnecessary to enlighten her. "And how did you fancy Razdaz— What did you say it was?" she asked.

"Mazdaznan. It means sun worship, but it teaches us to worship ourselves, for we are greater than the sun."

"A self-respecting creed, at all events."

"*Gewiss.* We possess the accumulated intelligence of all things that ever existed. Being everything, all we need is control, and this we get from Mazdaznan."

"I see."

"All one has to do is to live simply and breathe

properly; so few people breathe as they should. If one is weary or worried, a few breaths properly drawn will revive or soothe. It is very interesting and simple."

Hope remarked that their friend Mr. West would likely be interested in Mazdaznan: any new breathing system challenged his attention. She reopened her book, and Madame, taking the hint (and a saucepan which she transiently required), returned to her own apartments.

"Which poem was Churchill Gray's favorite?" Hope questioned, as she idled through the pages. Perhaps "The Day of the Daughter of Hades"; that was one of the long ones, and there were many wonderful passages in it; such as—

> "He saw through leaves
> The Mother and Daughter meet.
> They stood by the chariot-wheel,
> Embraced, very tall, most like
> Fellow poplars, wind-taken, that reel
> Down their shivering columns and strike
> Head to head, crossing throats."

She wished she knew for certain: she would commit the poem to memory, though it were twice as long as a Bach fugue. A sweet desire possessed her to

like the things he liked, to make his gods her gods, to look out on the world through his eyes. Ambition fell away; faded the picture so often in her mind—a crowded concert hall, the audience in a tumult, a gray-haired conductor taking a young woman by the hand to congratulate her. Another picture took its place: two in a valley, hand in hand by the river's brim, watching the rose-flush die and listening to the voice of the rapids.

Her day-dream was interrupted by the postman. He brought three letters. The scrawling superscription of one disclosed the hand of Farmer Winston; another was from West, the third from Flora. In this order they were opened.

Farmer Winston's communication was characteristically brief and unexpectedly uncheerful. He expressed gratification over his daughter's progress in her studies, but could hold out no hope of financial support beyond the conservatory year.

"Mother has been bad off this winter," he wrote; and he added (parenthetically, as perhaps the idea had occurred to him): "Been working too hard, likely."

So there was a doctor's score to settle. Then the gray mare had done for herself in a barbed-wire

fence, and a promising timber trade had fallen through. Altogether—

"Poor mother!" sighed Hope. "Why will she overdo?"

Alas! mothers are much the same the world over. They *will* overdo.

Memory flung back, unblurred by time or tears, Gray's scornful speech: "Teachers of music! . . . They ought to be back on the farm, helping their mothers with the housework."

A teacher of music! was that to be her career? Her heart sickened, and she put the hateful thought aside, realizing that the day was near when it could no longer be blinked.

Arthur's letter was all sunshine. *Would* Miss Winston, the charming hermit, forgo scourging herself with Bach and Brahms long enough to accompany Mr. West to a May Night entertainment. "Stanley Jones," he wrote, "proposes to celebrate the seventy-fifth thousand of his latest book with a literary costume party, or something of that sort. He is going to put a few of his royalties back into circulation, and he ought to be encouraged."

Flora's letter contained the gentle reproach: "Where *have* you been for a fortnight back? I have

been under the weather, and so could not look you up personally, but Arthur tells me you are declining all invitations and killing yourself with work. *Please* make an exception of the May party. As Arthur has probably told you, Mr. Jones is getting up a liter'y-paintery-music masquerade, and it promises good fun. Stanley (oh, I beg his pardon—the Sieur de Jones) has requested me to appear as Queen of the May, and is himself going as Literature. We both thought you would be very fetching, dearie, as the Heroine of Romance, maid-of-honor to the Queen. *Nobody* is expected to provide a costume; Mr. Jones requests the privilege of attending to that, and he promises to make the French court look like a poverty party.

"P. S.—I have some good news for you. You remember my telling you last winter about one of brother Fred's crazy business ventures, which carried off his and Churchill Gray's money. Well, Fred writes me from somewhere in Utah that the enterprise has panned out just as he said it would when he went into it, and that he and Churchill will get back their money and a lot more with it. Aren't you glad?—for Mr. Gray, *of course*. It's always the unexpected that happens, isn't it?"

Not always, my dear Miss Matheson. We occasion-

ally discount the future. There are some things, not making for our happiness, which we feel must happen some day; we dread them, yet we are not sorry when they come along and we can put them behind us.

The inevitable it is, not the unexpected, that always happens. It was inevitable that the barrier between Churchill Gray and Flora Matheson should some day be removed, since it was a mere matter of money, which neither esteemed beyond human happiness. Thus reasoned Princess Hope.

Yes; she was glad for Mr. Gray. Above all else, she desired his happiness. It was a simple thing to say, and say again and yet again. Yet it was the sum of her thought.

Madame Jesurin, saucepan in hand, knocked at the door of the smaller room. There was no response, and, the door being ajar, she entered and hung the utensil on its hook. Passing out, she glanced into the other apartment, and observed her young friend lying on the sofa, her face in her hands. A letter had fluttered to the floor.

Madame shut the door softly.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE QUEEN'S MAYING"

Sumptuous as are dramatic productions in our own times—to the last degree of extravagance, one would say—who has not wished that he might witness one of the masques which flourished in Ben Jonson's day, composed for princes and by princes played?—who, I mean, that is familiar with the history of those gorgeous and poetic entertainments. I confess I am not, being dependent for information upon Stanley Arthur Jones, ransacker of the past, dweller in dusty yesterdays. I have Mr. Jones's word for it that many of the masques cost the exhibitors as large a sum as a New York bachelor will spend on a small dinner at the Mammon Hotel; that nothing in our time can be

compared with them for magnificence of *mise en scène*, for poetic plan, invention, fancy, and exquisite art in the acting. No doubt Mr. Jones has the documents backing up this claim.

Casting about for some original and princely plan whereby to entertain his host of friends, the author of "With Rack and Wheel" hit upon the idea of an Elizabethan masque. He announced that, representing Literature, he should write a fanciful little something, and Painting, Architecture and Music were invited to coöperate, as was their privilege in the day of rare Ben. These arts should be represented by Mr. Jones's friends in the Pekoe Club and out of it, and they were requested to spare no expense in the matter of costume, Mr. Jones standing the entire magnificent treat.

The "fanciful little something" was written along lines suggested by Ernest Penwell, whose counsel the author solicited. "Since it is to celebrate one of the triumphs of letters," said Penwell, "let it be a literary masque. Thus, let the principal rôle, which you will play, be Literature, fantastically costumed as a Best-Seller, edition de luxe—doublet of crushed-Levant or limp-calf, hand-woven silk hose, and other things to match."

"Egad, a quaint conceit," murmured the author, flattered by the phrase, "triumph of letters."

"Then, a Queen of the May, to give the necessary touch of royalty—or royalties. Now, that superb Miss Matheson, I should say, would symbolize *your* royalties capitally."

Mr. Jones blushed with pleasure.

"Put me down," said Penwell, "as a Worst-Seller; or stay, cast me as publisher: this is Ercles' vein, a part to tear an author in; I have always yearned for the rôle."

"Excellent, i' faith," said Jones.

"Then you might have a Hero of Romance, and a Heroine of Romance; a couple of bravos, 'Sdeath and Gadzooks respectively; a duke or two, an innkeeper, etcetera, etcetera, as your Elizabethan fancy suggests. For properties, a literary hack, in which the Hero and Heroine elope, a Pierian Spring, a Well of English Undefiled, and what not. Lastly, a good title for the masque. . . ."

"I had thought of 'The Queen's Maying,'" replied Jones.

"The very thing!" Penwell declared.

And so it came to pass that on May Night the large hall on the top floor of the Beaux Arts Temple con-

tained the most brilliant spectacle imaginable. The French court was nowhere.

The reader, peeping over my shoulder at the enchanting picture, will recognize some of the figures.

That tall, splendidly-dressed gentleman in the crushed-Levant doublet is, of course, Literature: no handsomer hero graced the court of England's vestal queen. Bess, herself, who was no great beauty, would have cut but a sorry figure beside her impersonator, Flora Matheson, to whom Literature is at this moment making obeisance.

That stately lady with the ample ruff is Mrs. Addison West, personating "The Spacious Times of Queen Elizabeth." Her estimable husband is Master Geoffrey Chaucer, the genius of "The Well of English Undefiled,"—who was not, as I recall it, an Elizabethan. But he is not in the masque.

That merry gentleman with the queer long coat, "half of yellow and half of red," blowing on a pipe and replying "Rats!" to all questions, is the pied musician of Hamelin, Victor Mabbitt; and the effervescent gentleman at "The Well" is Karl Geist, symbolizing (for Mr. Jones's benefit) "A Toccata of Galuppi's." "Dry, very dry," he declares. "When does the well open?"

The jolly little man in a white apron, with a stage fowl in one hand and a bottle of wine in the other, is that familiar figure in Literature, the Innkeeper (Professor Jan Van Wart). And yonder is Doctor Dudelsack, personating Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha, "with brow ruled like a score," the lines and notes of which promise to vanish in perspiration.

Lastly (for it is not necessary further to extend our acquaintance), the Hero and Heroine of Romance. Arthur West, as an Elizabethan Sea Rover, cuts a gallant figure in a doublet of blue brocade, "or something of that sort," with hose to match and a great lace frill about his neck. Mistress Winston, as maid-of-honor to Queen Bess, is a vision of Elizabethan loveliness. Her skirt is of *gris d'été;* her bodice is *amarante* embroidered with pearls; her *manches a jigo* (I think that is what Mr. Jones termed them: his erudition is marvelous) are *amarante* slashed with *jaune paille;* pearls edge her fan-shaped collarette; and her coiffure, a towering mass of chestnut hair, reaches an apex in ornaments of pearls and gold.

The Heroine of Romance is almost feverishly gay; never before have her friends known her so ebullient. "I am out of drawing, I know," she confesses to Flora. "My rôle calls for as many tears as smiles."

"At court, my child," replies the Queen, "one must mask one's real emotions, and present a merry face though the heart be breaking."

"Soothly, soothly," remarks Literature, who is hovering near. "Smiles dispersed through tears, as sunlight through a shower, give us the rainbow, Arch of Hope, 'that tints to-morrow with prophetic ray.' "

In truth, one who closely watched the Heroine of Romance throughout the evening (need I mention that watcher's name?) observed, not infrequently, flashes of melancholy unassumed; moments of detachment when she vanished from the picture—or, as it seemed to the enamored Hero, when the picture fell away from *her*. She appeared to have "something on her mind," removing her at once from the character of Heroine of Romance, which has nothing to do with mind.

Of the performance of "The Queen's Maying," I shall not speak in detail. Literature, Painting, Music and Architecture gave excellent accounts of themselves, comparing favorably, I have no doubt, with the work of Ben Jonson, Inigo Jones, and other Elizabethan masque producers: the latter Jones, at all events, was satisfied. Our chief business this evening is not to witness the masque, but to keep our eye

on a certain youthful pair and harken to a colloquy between them.

Well, then, the masque was done, the supper eaten, and the dancing begun. Those that did not wish to dance were scattered through the neighboring studios. The Hero of Romance, animated by a sudden resolution (and possibly fortified by a draft from the Pierian Spring), went in search of the Heroine of Romance. He found her in the studio of Raphael Pree, with Queen Elizabeth. Her Majesty left them together.

"Dear Mistress Winston," the Hero murmured, "I have long waited a favoring moment to have speech with thee upon a matter very near my heart."

Gallantly spoken, in the high-flown language that prevailed throughout the evening; yet a little vibrato in the young gentleman's voice put Mistress Winston on her guard.

"Methinks, good gentleman," she answered, "the place, if not the hour, is but ill-chosen for a revealment so personal. Pray you avoid it."

"Yet must I speak, dear lady; for to-morrow I adventure forth to westering suns and sapphire waters, to the King of Spain his seas, to palm and tamarind-fringed shores and crystal bays, and other things too numerous to set down in good sooth or certitude."

Mistress Winston smiled: "Thy destination, dear sir, is nebulous as is the Milky Way."

"Ay, lady; my charts are blank paper; but I hear the hum of Clotho's wheel, and methinks she spins moats and crocodiles, pike and cutlass, and red, red gold."

"My prayers attend thee, sweet and gentle sir."

"I would have more than thy prayers, dear mistress," he declared, possessing himself of her hand.

She did not offer to withdraw it. Was she not the Heroine of Romance? Three centuries protected her.

"My prayers, good gentleman," she answered softly, "are all I have to give thee."

The Hero of Romance was visibly distressed.

"'Tis then as I feared," he said; "thy heart is given elsewhere."

"To Music, sweet sir."

The Hero of Romance was visibly relieved. He did not fear the rivalry of Music: Music was not a man. Besides, had not he, too, sworn allegiance to the art? Might not they serve Music together? Two souls were surely better than one. He intimated as much.

She shook her head: "A divided allegiance."

"A dual allegiance," he protested.

"Dear friend," she returned gently, "I can say no more." Her eyes were moist.

He drew in a steadying breath of Sixteenth Century atmosphere.

"Sweet lady," he said humbly, "I ask but to serve thee—thee and Music. Music is an ungenerous despot, who provides not for the most loyal subject. I have lands and riches: these I offer thee; with these thou mayst conquer the world . . ."

"'Or something of that sort,'" she interrupted flippantly, though her heart was brimming.

He laughed boyishly, in the Twentieth Century.

"Say yes—*do* say yes, Hope," he pleaded.

She looked into his eager eyes, and by the flashes of love's lightning glimpsed a golden future. Temptation swayed her. "Dear boy!" rose to her lips. But the words went unsaid, and she drew her hand away. The Heroine of Romance was herself again.

"Good gentleman, you are out of character," she rallied him.

He cleared three centuries, landing lightly on his feet.

"A plight your gentleman bucaneer oft finds himself in," he answered, with a shrug; "he hath little character to begin with, and that a bad one."

She suggested that the times were somewhat to blame.

"Ay, lady." He touched the frill about his neck. "These be ruff days."

"Atrocious!" exclaimed Mistress Winston, and both laughed unconstrainedly.

The Spacious Times of Queen Elizabeth glided into the studio.

"I came to say good night to Hope," she said sweetly, and took the young girl's hands. "We have seen very little of you lately, my dear."

"I have been uncommonly industrious," said Hope. "I must make the best of the last few weeks. There will be time enough to rest afterward."

The shadow that crossed her face was observed by son, if not by mother.

"I hope to see you at vacation time, at our country place," said Mrs. West. "Of course you will wish to make a visit home; but after that, if you can arrange to spend a few weeks with us, we shall be happy to entertain you. I know it will augment Arthur's happiness," she added, with a significance that disconcerted her son. "Good night, my children."

With which benediction the lady floated away. The children followed.

CHAPTER XXIII

A RHAPSODY AND A FAREWELL

Karl Geist's studio was unpretentious as himself. It contained a piano, three chairs, one of which was stacked with scores, a writing-table, a music-rack, and a small clock: these were essentials. Decorations: a square of carpet and a portrait of Sarasate, Geist's master. Doubtful decorations: a sprinkle of tobacco and ashes all about, and a half-dozen pipes out of commission, their stems snapped or bitten partly through.

At four in the afternoon Geist was engaged in copying a string quartette. As the little clock tinkled the hour he pushed his work aside, and glanced at the door, as if expecting the most punctual of pupils. A

minute passed; he picked up his pen. Ten more minutes went by; then came a hurried knocking, and Miss Winston entered, somewhat out of breath.

"Tardy for the first time," said Geist, taking her exercise book and music-roll, while she removed her gloves and jacket.

"I am sorry," said Hope. "I have been moving today, and the expressman was behindhand."

"So. Have you deserted the north side?"

"Yes; I am now at Two-ten Park View Boulevard, only a few minutes' walk from here. I shall have no excuse for being tardy again."

Geist looked up from the exercise book. "What number did you say?"

"Two hundred and ten. . . . Do you know the house?"

"I seem to recall an old-fashioned brownstone front, a bit run down at the heel."

"That describes it. But my rooms are uncommonly well furnished, and the meals are promising. Well!" She drew a chair to the writing-table.

"I don't like that bass progression," said the teacher, laying finger on a measure of the day's lesson. "Diatonic would be better. Or you might lower the sixth and pass into the dominant."

So they took up the business of the hour, further reference to which would scarcely prove entertaining to the reader unfamiliar with "collateral sevenths" and kindred delightful mysteries.

The harmony lesson over, Hope opened her music-roll. "I am working on a Brahms Rhapsody," she said. "Will you hear me play it?"

Geist took the music. "So; the G-minor. Miss Weathers also has this rhapsody in hand. She will be in presently, to go over it with me."

"May I remain?"

"I was about to suggest that each play, and criticize the other's performance."

Geist put the music aside, and entertained Miss Winston with an amusing account of a soulful female who had waited on him that forenoon, to suggest that he set certain of her poems to music. She had dozens and dozens of them; the only question was, which style did he prefer, "the heroic, the ragtime, or the sentimental"? He expressed a leaning toward the heroic; whereupon she gave him half a dozen manuscripts to try his hand on. This was the opening line of one of them: "*I was called home on a telegram.*"

"*Himmel!*" declared Geist; "even Schubert could have done nothing with such a line."

They were chuckling over the soulful lady's heroics when Rhoda Weathers appeared.

Rhoda's "Good afternoon" was lacking in warmth. She walked to the window as she drew off her gloves, expecting Miss Winston to depart.

"Miss Winston is here for the same purpose as yourself," Geist informed her. "She, too, is working on the G-minor Rhapsody."

Rhoda turned her big eyes wonderingly upon the other girl.

"Our tastes seem to be much alike," Hope said, smiling.

The words or the smile struck fire in Rhoda's eyes, which blazed with the resentment she had exhibited at their last encounter. Her lips moved, but no words issued. The antagonism was unobserved by Geist, who was walking about the room, tuning his violin.

"You will each play, and criticize the other," he said.

Rhoda's lips joined tightly. The "difficult child" appeared uncommonly difficult this afternoon, inexplicably sullen.

"Perhaps," said Hope, turning to Geist, "Miss Weathers would prefer to play for you alone."

"I think not," he answered quietly. "Miss Weath-

ers prefers what her teacher prefers. Begin, Miss Winston."

Hope went obediently to the piano, and began the rhapsody.

Geist stopped her after a few measures, to suggest that she double the theme with her thumb; and again to inquire: "Why don't you accent more?"

"It sounded jerky to me," she replied.

"Jerky? Well—if you like that word. I prefer *accent*. Go on."

The rhapsody proceeded, without further interruption, to its tumultuous close.

Geist turned to Rhoda: "Well, Miss Weathers, what is your criticism?"

The musician in Rhoda answered frankly: "I thought it was beautifully played."

"It was flawless, then," said Geist ironically. "There is no room for improvement."

"The contrasts might be more marked."

"Might be? *Should* be." He turned to Hope. "Light and shade, light and shade, Miss Winston; not a diffused light throughout. Repose, too, is lacking: you *must* acquire repose; and one hour's expressionless practice with that end in view is better than pounding away for hours *espressivo*. This rhapsody

is not difficult technically, so far as the mere getting over the keys is concerned; but it *is* difficult to play artistically, and you are some distance from that. We shall take it up again next week."

"Thank you," Hope said humbly, and gave place to Miss Weathers.

The latter proceeded to amaze her listeners; not by the excellence of her playing, though this was of a high order, but by her strange interpretation of the master's music. It was not a rhapsody she played, but a threnody—a personal narrative, a subjective *tour de force*. It affected Hope cruelly, as music never before had affected her. She glanced at Geist, and saw that his brow was contracted. Tragedy was in the room.

The performance ended in a crashing discord and a sob from the pianist. Hope crossed swiftly and put an arm soothingly about Rhoda's shoulders. That was the only criticism of the performance.

Geist turned to the window, and stood looking into the street. . . . He heard a slight stir behind him; then the door shut softly. He was alone. The two girls had gone away together.

Half an hour later Churchill Gray entered the studio.

"I dropped in to say good-by for a while," he announced. "I'm off for the woods. Better hang up your fiddle and your bow, Uncle Karl, and come along."

"Uncle Karl" declined to consider a proposition so unseasonable. "When do you leave?" he asked.

"To-night."

"To-night?" Geist repeated thoughtfully. "Have a pipe."

"My dear Karl, your pipes are all unsmokable, and you know it."

"Get me some new ones, then."

"What would be the use? You would ruin them in a week. I'll warrant your friends lock up all their good pipes when they expect a call from you."

"Can't say. Mine is not a suspicious nature. . . . So you leave to-night?"

"At ten of the clock."

"Trunk gone?"

"My pack-sacks are in the baggage room; my bark canoe is on the shore, awaiting me. I shall be gone three months—perhaps longer."

"Wait till the conservatory year closes, and I'll go with you. You invited me once."

"The invitation holds good. I make an exception in

your favor, for which I hope you are properly grateful. Join me if you will, and when you can. You will find me on the shore, both hands stretched in welcome."

Geist took up his violin and played a few measures. "Recognize that?" he queried.

"Sonata by one Brahms, D-minor—my favorite."

"I am going to play it with Mrs. Maybury to-morrow night. Stay and hear it."

"No." Gray smiled. "Not even to hear Josef Hofmann run a scale. You see, nothing can detain me. The spring and the forest are calling: all other music is as sounding brass or a tinkling triangle."

Geist put down his violin and began to dig out the most promising of his pipes. "Sorry you're clearing out so suddenly; I wanted to have a talk with you."

"My time is yours till ten. Fire away."

Geist lighted his impossible pipe and puffed moodily at it.

"You appear uncommonly thoughtful to-day, not to say gloomy," Gray observed. "What's on your mind, Karlchen?"

"The beautiful Miss Winston—for one thing."

"A charming incubus." Gray, surprised, looked keenly at the musician. "Others are similarly afflicted," he remarked carelessly.

Geist hitched his chair closer to his friend's. "I don't like the attentions a certain person is paying to the girl," he said earnestly.

"I dare say each of her numerous admirers feels that way about it."

"Her reputation is at stake."

"No scandal, I hope."

"There might be."

"It's a bit early in her career for that. Later a scandal or two would not be without advertising value."

"I am not deceived by your pretended cynicism."

"Discerning Karlchen!"

"The matter is serious," rejoined Geist, with a flash of irritation. "The girl is as innocent and unsuspicious as a child, and the man is a damned scoundrel. Somebody should warn her."

"Who but her guide, philosopher and friend, Karl Geist?"

The musician flushed. "I disclaim any such privilege. Some one closer to her should speak the word." He looked hard at Gray.

"My dear Karl, you flatter me. I assure you I am not in the young lady's confidence. Your pipe is out, by the way."

Geist broke three matches before he succeeded in relighting it.

"The young lady's frequent references to you have led me to believe otherwise," he said. "I don't know why you should conceal your interest in her."

"I have no reason to conceal my interest in Miss Winston," Gray answered slowly. "I believe she will bring much glory to her art and herself. My relations with her, however, are too tenuous to warrant my setting up as a mentor in her private affairs. Why don't you take Arthur West into your confidence? No one, I am sure, is closer to Miss Winston."

"Pshaw! I don't believe she gives him a serious thought. Arthur is a nice young chap, but he is hardly her style."

"Indeed! I had been expecting an announcement."

Gray's reserve showed signs of melting, and Geist, observing the change in his friend's manner, smiled faintly.

"What do you know about the damned scoundrel aforesaid?" pursued Gray.

"Nothing—positive; that is why I hesitate. By God! if I *did* know . . ."

Geist sprang up and began pacing the room, an ugly look on his face; at which Gray marveled. His

friend's interest in Miss Winston seemed explicable on one ground only.

"A fellow feeling," he remarked dryly, "should make us wondrous cautious. Suppose you consult with Flora Matheson. You or I, Karl, would make a botch of so delicate a disclosure. Women manage these things much better."

"I'll consider it," Geist replied shortly. "Where shall you be during the next few weeks?"

"I intend to camp a month on the shore, to toughen my flabby tissues against a rough expedition into the interior."

"Would a letter reach you?"

"It might. Send it to Ledge, care of Charley Ericsson. I shall drop you a line before the forest swallows me."

"I may have some news to send you."

"I warn you I'll light my pipe with it. . . . By the way, here is a little something to remind you of my existence." Gray laid a small package on the table. "And now, come to dinner with me."

"Can't. I have some work to do. But I may show up at the train."

"In case you don't, I shall say good-by now."

The men clasped hands warmly.

"Good-by, Church," said Geist. "A joyful summer to you. And don't get too far away; leave the trail open behind you."

"I shall scatter breadcrumbs along the way, for the birds to eat. Good-by, Karlchen, and Heaven bless you!"

"So long, old man," returned the other fervently. He bit through the stem of his pipe, and the bowl fell to the floor.

Gray laughed, and closed the door behind him.

"Dear old sphinx!" muttered Geist; and picking up his violin, he relieved his feelings with a page or two of Hubay's "Diabolical Scherzo."

Presently his eyes fell on the package Gray had left. He opened it and drew forth a beautiful English brier pipe, with three extra mouthpieces.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MADAME JESURIN MAKES AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY

Madame Jesurin was sincerely sad when Hope Winston departed from Atwood Street. She had become greatly attached to the girl, and had profited by the acquaintance in more ways than one. So it was with a little shriek of delight that, one showery afternoon, she fell upon Hope in a corridor of the Art Museum. They had been separated a full week.

"What joy, *Herzblättchen*, to see you again!" exclaimed the Countess. "We have missed you so! Mrs. Grady is quite inconsolable."

"I was thinking of you this morning," said Hope. "Two tickets came for the Symphony concert—the

last of the season, you know. Would you like one of them?"

Natürlich. Madame welcomed the opportunity to spend another evening with her young friend, quite aside from the pleasure of listening to the music. And how sad to think there would be no more concerts for five months! How *should* they contrive to exist without them! What a dull world this would be but for music—and painting: let us not forget painting.

They were drifting through the galleries.

"My favorite picture," remarked Madame, pointing out a large nude on the facing wall. "Such drawing! Such color! It is wonderful! I love Bouguereau!"

Miss Winston dismissed the canvas with one contemptuous glance. Churchill Gray had remarked of it: "It is anatomy, not art. I always feel ashamed when I see that picture."

Hope recalled pensively the afternoon (how long ago it seemed!) when Gray walked with her through the Museum. Absorption, he told her, was the best way to study a picture, and he indicated the canvases best worth absorbing, in his opinion. "Memorize a few of the great ones," he said, "and you will have a criterion by which to determine false and true."

She drew Madame Jesurin's attention to a landscape by Daubigny.

"*That* is Mr. Gray's favorite picture," she remarked, with a touch of pride in her voice.

"Grand!" exclaimed the Countess, peering at the name-plate. "I love Daubigny. He is one of the Barbican school."

"I have looked at that picture so long and so often, that I can shut my eyes and bring back every bit of it," said Hope dreamily.

"Mr. Gray is a charming gentleman," Madame declared pointedly. Miss Winston turned away to admire another picture.

They moved along, from gallery to gallery, and Hope was much impressed by the sum and variety of Madame's art information. It was a grab-bag information: one never could say what she would fish up next. For example, she paused to admire a copy of "a sweet Corelli."

"Oh, does Corelli *paint*, too?" Hope inquired innocently.

"*O du mein Gott!* a tongue slip!" cried Madame, laughing. "I should have said Correggio."

Hope remarked that the slip was quite natural: both names began with a C.

They separated, agreeing to meet again, at eight o'clock, in the vestibule of Music Hall; and Hope proceeded to the conservatory, for her last "lesson" in the Studio of the Soul.

Of all the musical pretenders with whom she had been brought in contact she liked best Jan Van Wart. Others were pompously assertive, irritatingly dull, complacently incompetent; Van Wart was a joy. Whether justly or not, she gave him credit for taking himself, at bottom, unseriously; so when she laughed at his impersonations of the music masters, she felt that she was laughing with him, and not at him.

She considered his Chopin impersonation the best fun. As Richard Wagner, he was apt to be tedious, with his disquisitions on politics and philosophy. When he counterfeited Beethoven his deafness and short temper precluded any sort of conversation. On Liszt days he was given to taking the student's hand and speaking whole volumes in folio with his eyes; though it was only fair to say that he never carried the rôle of the susceptible Abbé beyond certain limits of discretion.

One easily guessed the present day's impersonation: the cloudy sky, the intermittent downpour, presaged

the melancholy Pole. Thus, when Hope entered the Studio of the Soul, Van Wart was gazing pensively at a small portrait of George Sand, and the air of the dimly-lighted room was murmurous with his sighs. The rain plashed rhythmically against the window-pane, "tears of Heaven falling on his heart."

He was recalling, one surmised, that dismal, stormy night on the Island of Majorka. George and Maurice had gone to Palma, to purchase such prosaic but necessary things as butter and eggs and a pound of cheese; and thinking of the dangers that environed them, Chopin was reduced to a state of numb despair. At sight of Hope, Van Wart exclaimed, with a wandering air and in a strange voice: "Ah, I was sure that you were dead!" She made no reply, but sat down quietly at the piano and played the "Raindrop" prelude in D-flat, while the reëmbodied Chopin, in the depths of his easy chair, wept silently.

As the prelude drew to its close, the rain ceased beating on the pane, and when the last note died away in the soulful silence the sun broke through the clouds and dispelled the studio's gloom. The effect on Van Wart was instant: his depression vanished; he bounced up like a rubber ball, his round face wreathed in smiles.

"You played that prelude beautifully!" he cried, in genuine appreciation. "Don't run away," he added, as she reached for her music-roll; "no more students will be in to-day. Won't you sit down? Take this big chair."

She accepted it, and Van Wart, receiving permission, lighted a cigarette.

"Well, the musical jig is up, for a few blessed months," he remarked. "Aren't you glad?"

"I don't know," said Hope. "I dare say a rest will do me good."

"You will be coming back in the fall, I suppose?" he inquired.

"I hope I may be able to. I am not sure."

"It would be a great pity if you dropped out, as so many of them do," Van Wart said seriously. "I have watched your progress with a great deal of interest. You have made remarkable strides. I have always enjoyed your recitations, and that is saying a great deal."

She replied that higher praise was not to be expected, and they chatted half an hour or more. Van Wart had a fund of musical stories, and he told them well. He could talk, also, on other things than music: he was very fond of Matthew Arnold; he was in-

tensely interested in Arctic exploration; his hobby was trout fishing, and he tied his own flies. Jan Van Wart, when he chose to be himself, was excellent company. Miss Winston's "I hope I shall see you again, Professor," was said in all sincerity.

It was nearly six o'clock when she left the conservatory, and as she had some shopping to do, and dinner to dispose of, she was a quarter-hour late in joining Madame Jesurin in Music Hall.

"Fortunately we have our seats and can go right to them," said Hope, as she slipped in just before the inner doors were closed.

People who held regular seats for the Symphony series did not trouble the ushers to indicate them. As Miss Winston was practically a season-ticket holder, she waved the attaché aside, as usual, and tripped down the aisle, followed by Madame Jesurin. To her surprise, J 89 and 90 were already taken.

She looked so hard at the interlopers, a lady and gentleman, that the gentleman referred to his seat checks for assurance that he was not in error. Hope, for her part, glanced at the bits of pasteboard in her hand, and discovered that they represented parquet chairs N 61 and 62. She retreated in confusion, followed by the amused glance of the occupant of J 89.

The new seats were as good as the old; but why the change?

"It is certain they are regular seats," said the Countess.

"Or were until to-night," amended Hope.

To herself Madame remarked: "I will solve the mystery during intermission." But she said nothing to her young friend about her plan; she was not sure Miss Winston would approve it.

The concert began, and Hope gave strict attention. It was the last of the series, and might be the last she should hear for years; the reflection made every note precious. And it was such a programme as she wished to remember: a Bach suite, a Handel aria, Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the final scene from "Götterdämmerung," two arias from "Die Meistersinger" and the Prelude to that incomparable opera.

How brief the Symphony seemed! Regretfully she heard each movement draw to a close. . . . And now more than half of the programme was done; there remained only the Wagner numbers.

Madame Jesurin rose for the intermission before Herr Herschel left the stage, and, remarking that she wished to see a friend on very important business, she hurried away. Hope, quite willing to be left alone,

followed slowly to the foyer. Here the first familiar faces she saw were those of Miss Matheson and Karl Geist, and she halted to observe Flora, as more than one person was doing.

Always good to look upon, Miss Matheson, fetchingly gowned in green, was to-night more superb than ever before; and she seemed redundantly happy. Geist, too, was in high spirits, and the pair were laughing merrily over some remark of the musician's. It was he who first glimpsed Miss Winston, and he waved a hand of recognition. Flora did more: she hastened to Hope, and put an arm about her waist.

"Congratulate me, dearie," she whispered, and held up her left hand. A diamond glittered on the engagement finger.

"I do, I do, Flora, dear!" said Hope, her heart in her voice. "You deserve a world of happiness."

"No more than some one else I know," replied Flora archly.

"I am glad, truly glad, for him," Hope whispered. "You—you are looking very beautiful to-night, Flora —and very happy."

"Come and see me to-morrow morning, and hear the details. I must run along now." With a parting squeeze of affection she went her radiant way.

Madame Jesurin was waiting to pounce upon Hope, and did so the instant Flora left her.

"*Schätzchen! Schätzchen!*" she cried, her eyes snapping with excitement, "*nun ist alles klar:* your good fairy is Mr. Gray!"

This disclosure, so swiftly following Flora's, threw "*Schätzchen*" into cruel bewilderment.

"I—I don't understand," she said, passing a hand over her eyes.

Madame was bursting with the explanation.

"The seats are *Post* seats. They go each week to Mr. Gray."

"But I—who—how do you know?"

"I asked the man in the box office."

"How *could* you!" exclaimed Hope, amazed at the audacity.

"*Ach,* I did not ask him directly, but invented a story about the seats, and so found out."

Madame was gleeful over her own cleverness, but as her young friend did not share her delight, she added soberly: "I thought, *Liebchen,* you wished to know."

"Why, yes . . . I wished to know," repeated Hope, still bewildered. And now that she knew, she wished Madame Jesurin a thousand miles away.

They went back to their seats, but Hope heard the music as in a dream; her mind was a woeful tangle. Little by little she unraveled the snarl of her thoughts, and drew a few threads clear.

Thread One: The Symphony Orchestra gave two concerts weekly. The first of these Churchill Gray attended, perforce, in a critical capacity; on Saturday night he attended for pleasure, or remained away. If he came, he retained one of his tickets, and perhaps exchanged it for a seat in some other part of the hall; possibly, if the house were full, he stood up. If he spent the evening elsewhere, Miss Winston received two tickets. He had been unable, for some reason, to send the regular seats for the last concert, but had provided two others.

Thread Two: The picture of Brahms had also come from Gray; likewise a number of books on music and musicians, reviews of which she had observed in the *Post*. Gray had taken pains to keep his benefactions a secret, but he had not reckoned on Madame Amelia Jesurin.

Thread Three: Gray was going to marry Flora Matheson, and Hope Winston was the most sadly glad and the most miserably gay young woman in all the world. What music could better match her mood than

Siegfried's "Funeral March" and Walther's "Song of Spring."

O happy, happy Flora! Do you realize the full measure of your great good fortune? Are you (I should be the last to question it, for I love you truly, Flora, dear)—are you quite worthy of the love of Churchill Gray, dearest and sweetest of men, Prince of the Heart of Gold? Pray that you are and ever shall be; and I wish you both a world of joy.

"*Come and see me to-morrow morning and hear the details.*" Oh, no, no; that would be torture! If Flora knew, if Flora only knew! But Flora, happily, knows nothing about it. No; the details will keep, preserved in their own sugar.

Karl Geist overtook Miss Winston at the street corner.

"Are you walking home?" he inquired; and as she was, he gave himself the pleasure of joining her.

"I suppose Flora told you the joyful news," he remarked casually.

"Yes."

"Were you surprised?"

"Oh, no; they have known each other a long time."

"So? I gathered from Jones that the acquaintance was comparatively recent."

"Flora is better authority, don't you think?" ventured Hope.

"Well, perhaps so. Good enough, at all events. It may be that Jones wished to convey the idea of a quick conquest. . . . Well, they are nicely matched, and—

" '*Noch ist die schöne, die blühende Zeit,*
Noch sind die Tage der Rosen' "—

Geist sang softly.

Hope made no comment. Stanley Arthur Jones interested her less than ever. Flora had flirted with him madly; possibly there was method in it.

"I did not see Mr. Gray at the concert."

"Gray?" Geist gave her a curious side-glance. "Gray left for the woods last night."

Gone! and she might never see him again!

"I was telling Flora a good joke on our friend West," said Geist, after a short silence. "Arthur was complaining to Victor Mabbitt that he seemed to sing worse instead of better, wasn't any nearer the right method than ever. 'Oh, keep a stiff upper lip,' said Mabbitt. Arthur took him literally, and is now trying the stiff upper lip method. Victor says his contortions are worth watching."

"Poor Arthur!" murmured Hope, echoing Geist's laugh faintly. "Can't something be done about his voice?"

"*Himmel!* He ought to take it to a sanatorium and give it about twenty years' rest."

"Is it utterly spoiled, do you think?"

"It ought to be. He has been in the hands of the charlatans long enough to ruin a much better voice than he began with."

"Curious! He is quick enough to see through other pretenders."

"Each of us is blind to his own particular weakness, or shuts his eyes against it."

"Poor Arthur!" said Hope again. "He is a dear boy. . . . This is my new home."

Geist glanced casually at the shabby brownstone.

"Oh, yes."

"Thank you for your company. Good night."

"*Auf wiedersehen.*"

Geist moved along, lighting the brier remembrance which Churchill Gray had given him.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HAPPINESS OF A CERTAIN YOUNG GENTLEMAN IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED

Have you ever, by any chance, beloved reader, striven to persuade yourself that you loved a member of the opposite sex?

Let us say you have inspired in him the tenderest of passions, and that he loves you devotedly: he has told you so; you know it must be true. He deserves to be loved in return; and if only you can convince yourself that you *do* love him, a great many difficulties will be smoothed away, and you will be able to do, with a tranquil conscience, what seems the right, the inevitable thing.

Well, first you throw on memory's magic-lantern screen the face and form of Him That Should Be

Loved, at the moment when he seemed most worthy. This is difficult, as the lantern lights the picture ill, and intermittently.

I have often closed my eyes and tried to bring back a favorite river vista. Flash!—a cañon wall and a swirl of creamy waters in a pool; an instant later it is gone. Flash!—the other wall of the cañon, a fallen, bark-stripped cedar lying alongside, its butt anchored against a boulder. Flash!—the brown river above the fall, a tall pine on the brink of the gorge, the blue sky. But try as I will, I can not visualize the entire picture, nor hold one fragment while I patch another to it.

So with the face and form of Him That Should Be Loved. The magic lantern works poorly. But you catch, now a cluster of Hyperion curls, now a pair of honest blue eyes, and now a winning mouth; and supplementing these details with remembrance of a spoken word, a joyous laugh, you are in the proper mood to consider the important question: "Do I love him?"

Let us see.

You take pleasure in his society; you can not recall a single occasion when you wished him elsewhere, or would cut short a tête-à-tête by the fraction of a minute. You have walked with him, talked with him, and

found him ever an agreeable companion; he wears well, in a word. And you feel he will change but little with the years, and that little for the better.

His tastes are yours in many matters; where he can not sympathize he is sympathetically tolerant. Say he will not stimulate, inspire you: how many husbands do inspire and stimulate their wives?—it is usually the other way about. Say he will not "understand": how many husbands understand?

True, the touch of his hand does not thrill; you do not wake in the night with his name on your lips, and stretch your arms into the dark, to bring them back, empty, with a sigh; you do not hunger for his lips, his eyes, his hair.

Are these the manifestations of love? *Must* one thrill and hunger? There seems to be a consensus of opinion affirmative.

The next question is: "If I do not love him, can I learn to love him?" This opens up a wider, mistier field; but certain things are clear enough. He That Should Be Loved is young, sufficiently good-looking, and more than sufficiently rich. You have, we will say, chosen music as your art, and feel that, given the opportunity, you can become one of the few great pianists of the age. Well, you have only to say the word

(there are but three letters in it), and riches will be poured into your lap. You may study where you will —in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, New York; it is all one to the happy youth who idolizes you.

Nor does he ask immediate possession; you may retain your liberty of soul and body as long as you see fit, with the priceless privilege of changing your mind: the riches you have taken may then be construed as a loan, to be repaid when the horn of plenty tilts in your direction. You see, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Whatever your answer may be, remember, always, that no one can possibly love you more, no one can desire your happiness more keenly, than he who has the honor to subscribe himself your sincere friend and well-wisher. . . .

Hope sat a long time with Arthur's letter in her hand. It had come at a critical time in her affairs.

The music year was at its close, and recent advices from home made it absolutely certain that no more funds would be forthcoming for her musical education; Farmer Winston had no more to give.

Eight months ago, when ignorance was bliss, a music year seemed a sufficient time in which to be-

come a concert pianist; now Hope realized that one year was but the merest preparation; that, swiftly as she had progressed, the goal was still far distant. She had realized this for some weeks past, dreading the day when the question of her future must be faced and answered.

The question of tuition fees was the lightest of her perplexities. She might continue another year on the same easy terms; indeed, tuition expenses might be eliminated, if she wished; Doctor Erdmann had intimated as much. "In the cause of Art . . ."

But how, meanwhile, to live? There lay the problem.

She thought of supporting herself by some light employment which would allow her sufficient time to pursue her studies. But what could she do? Of office work she was ignorant, and a glance over the "Help Wanted" column of the daily paper suggested nothing else except domestic service. Teach music? she smiled at the thought. To be sure, she was better qualified than half the teachers of music in the United States; but she was altogether incapable of their effrontery; an even stronger deterrent was her sense of humor.

Domestic service was all that offered, and that was

scarcely practicable. She was not afraid of the jump from Mrs. Addison West's drawing-room to Mrs. Dilday's backstairs; but would Mrs. Dilday permit her to use the piano (provided Mrs. Dilday had one), and to practise four hours a day? Pshaw!

The present problem was too large to refer to Doctor Erdmann, or even to Mrs. Maybury. An offer of assistance, she reasoned, would be out-and-out charity, rather than accept which she would go back to the provinces and teach; that, with all its dreariness, was one degree less distasteful.

After all, the alternative of packing her trunk and returning to Swiftwater was to reply "Yes" to the letter in her hand.

She read it through again.

No; she could not convince herself that she loved Arthur. She did not love anybody—now; for one can not love a gentleman who has engaged himself to marry one's friend. The secondary question, Could she grow to love Arthur? remained open.

Of course it was not *impossible,* she told herself. Arthur would have to wait a few years, as he was prepared to wait; there would not be room in her thoughts for two passions. But when she came into her artistic own, there would be leisure to cultivate a genuine

affection, which was the enduring basis of all matrimonial relations.

In such circumstances, they would be happy, in a subdued way. To the mind-picture of her triumphs on the concert stage, she added a young man waiting, behind scenes, to drape an opera cloak about her shoulders, and whisper a word of praise more welcome even than the intoxicating plaudits of the audience at large.

Great as her debt to Arthur would be, she would nevertheless be independent in a money way; and out of her own earnings she would repay her parents, a hundredfold, all they had spent on her. The Winston acres should be augmented indefinitely; the little mother should no longer "overdo," and the little sister should adventure into the great wide world on her own account, and learn wherein it differed from the world of faëry.

A pleasant vision, but it required a base. What if, after all, affection for Arthur should be lacking? The vision faded.

She did not consider herself; she did not tremble for her own peace of mind, nor view with abhorrence a prospect of living in wedlock with a man for whom she felt only esteem. A little later she was to regard

the question from the viewpoint of her own salvation: to-day the young man's happiness was her chief concern.

Suddenly flashed through her mind the deliberately-voiced advice of Churchill Gray: "Sacrifice your friends to your art."

Ought she to sacrifice Arthur? Her sympathetic little heart rebelled. Since, in his blind adoration, Arthur would be manifestly incapable of regarding the immolation with a rational eye, was it not her duty to protect him against himself?

Still, did she not owe a larger duty to Music? "In the cause of Art," what was one Arthur more or less? A thousand lovers might be happy or miserable—it was all one to Art. Art must be selfish: those were Gray's words. She recalled a fragment of their conversation:

"Is that not dangerous advice?"

"If the person to whom it is given be not a genius —yes."

"Why the distinction?"

"Because Music would gain nothing by the sacrifice."

Ah! *Was* she a genius? It would be wise to make sure before further debating the question of immolat-

ing Arthur West. But how is one to find out? Small use to ask one's friends; they return an enthusiastic affirmative. As little profit to ask one's self: so many of us have been mistaken; it is impossible wholly to eliminate personal prejudice.

She knew she had great talent; there needed no ghost, come from the spirit world where dwelt the departed masters, to tell her that. But did she possess transcendent Genius? Only to such would she sacrifice her meanest friend. She required the verdict of a competent, unprejudiced judge; and it came to her that she should find such a judge in Madame Therese Friedenthal. Madame would not even remember setting eyes on her. She would, when informed that the matter was important, hear her play, and would tell her frankly what she wished to know.

Hope folded Arthur's letter and kissed it, murmuring "Dear boy!" Then she donned her wraps, and set out for the west side of the city.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HAPPINESS OF A CERTAIN YOUNG GENTLEMAN IS APPARENTLY DECIDED

A middle-aged woman answered the bell.

"I wish to see Madame Friedenthal," said the visitor.

"Have you an appointment?"

"No. But I am very anxious to see Madame at once, if she is at home. The matter is important."

"Is it about lessons?"

"Not exactly; though later I may wish to study."

"Madame is to be seen only by appointment," said the guardian of the door.

Hope stepped into the hall.

"Very well," she said serenely, although surprised

by her own audacity. "Please ask Madame whether she will make an appointment with Miss Winston for this afternoon."

The woman opposed a natural imperturbation to Hope's assumed placidity.

"Appointments are made by letter," she returned.

"Madame is coming down the stairs," said Hope. "Will you ask her—or shall I?"

Madame Friedenthal by this time had reached the hall, and came forward.

"Who is it?" she queried sharply, and looked peeringly at the determined visitor.

"Miss Winston," Hope replied nervously. "You do not remember me . . ."

"Yes: you were at the concert."

She did remember, it appeared; and she held out her hand. Madame was in an amiable mood. That was auspicious.

"I hope you will pardon my coming without an appointment," Hope apologized; "but I felt I *must* see you to-day."

She was requested to step into the music-room, and wait briefly while Madame attended to some domestic matter.

The house was old-fashioned, and the music-room

consisted of two parlors thrown into one. In the second of these were two grand pianos, placed side by side, and above them a large portrait of Beethoven. A few good oil paintings decked the walls, with a considerable number of autographed photographs of the world's renowned, and half a dozen faded laurel wreaths, eloquent of triumphs past. Here Hope tarried, in a growing trepidation, wondering how she should formulate the question she had come to ask. By the time Madame Friedenthal returned the opening sentence was decided on.

"I am studying music," said Hope, after the preliminary pleasantries, "and I wish to find out whether it is worth while for me to continue."

Madame Friedenthal was politely interested. Possibly she had heard something of the sort before.

"I mean," continued Hope, realizing that she had only partly stated the matter, "my future depends on my knowing, now, whether I have genius or only talent."

"So?" Madame smiled. "The assurance of your friends does not satisfy you?"

"No. I must learn it from some one who can speak with authority and without prejudice; so I have come to you, Madame Friedenthal."

"Do you wish to study with me?" asked Madame.

"If I have genius."

"Talent would not be enough?" Madame's eyes twinkled.

"It would satisfy me—yes; for then I should know that nothing higher was attainable."

Madame Friedenthal was slightly puzzled. She was not expected to know that the happiness of a young man hung in the balance between talent and genius.

"I do not demand genius of a student," she said; "if I did I should have very few pupils. Do you think of teaching?"

"No; at least not until I have learned all there is to know."

"Then you will never teach."

Both smiled.

"My situation is this," said Hope, more at her ease: "I have gone so far in my studies, and have no more money of my own to continue. Assistance has been offered me, but this I can not accept unless I am satisfied I can become a great pianist."

Madame nodded. The matter was a little clearer. "Tell me what you have done," she said kindly.

Hope told her—everything the reader already

knows, and a great deal besides, which the biographer has deemed it wise to pass over, unwilling to trespass on the reader's good nature. She mentioned her predilection for Johannes Brahms, and a corresponding disinclination for Frederic Chopin; whereat Madame Friedenthal raised her black eyebrows a trifle.

"Not even genius is permitted such prejudices," she said. "The musical world has passed judgment on the masters, and we must accept them—all. One composer may appeal to you more than another, but you can not, as an artist, cultivate aversions. The true musician does not ask, 'Who wrote it?' but, 'Is it good?'" She rose. "I will hear you play."

Face to face with the keyboard and the crucial test, Hope's small stock of assurance dwindled to nothingness; her limbs trembled, and her teeth might have chattered if they had not been shut so tightly. Madame Friedenthal, who had drawn a chair beside her, looked so stern and unsympathetic; her expression seemed to say: "You have invited this test; acquit yourself well, or woe be unto you."

"Shall I play some Bach?" asked Hope, and wondered whether she was heard. Madame nodded yes, and settled herself to listen.

Poor Hope! Her hands were numb with nervous-

ness. The opening measure was a blur. She stopped, and rubbed her fingers smartly.

"Try it again," Madame said encouragingly.

Then Hope disclosed the stuff of which concert heroines are made. Drawing a deep breath of "Mazdaznan," she struck with decision the turn which begins the Bach Prelude, and played that and the accompanying fugue as well as she had ever played them.

Madame's comment was favorable. She made one or two criticisms. "Play some Beethoven," she suggested. "One movement will answer."

Hope selected the Third Sonata of Opus 31. The first movement went capitally.

"Let me hear the second movement," said Madame.

This went even better. Madame Friedenthal was not a medium like Mynheer Van Wart; but her intense nature, under proper conditions, radiated artistic sympathy; the conditions being present, something of her own fiery genius was communicated to the young woman.

"Very well done!" she said, nodding her head vigorously, with a little tremor in her voice.

It was enough—more than enough. Madame was notoriously niggardly of praise. You or I, beloved reader, would have cried out "Bravo!" But if we

had watched as many frogs inflate as had Madame Friedenthal, we should likely be as chary of commendation; for there are few more painful sights than a frog inflated to the danger point; one would not have the explosion on one's conscience.

Hope was secretly elated, but not inflated. To Madame's "Very well done!" she returned a grateful "Thank you," and rose from the piano. The question of genius was dismissed with a tacit affirmative.

Madame Friedenthal then harked back to the story of Miss Winston's musical life, and preached a little sermon on the text "Thou shalt have no prejudices." Thou, of course, referred to the student. The teacher is an autocrat, and the student must humble herself; she has no individuality, she is a slave. If she become an artist, she may disclose her individuality, but not before.

"You speak of interpretation," said Madame (Miss Winston had used the word airily); "what right have you to speak of it now? Can you *play* a scale?"

Hope murmured a meek negative.

"If the time ever comes when you have a perfect technic you may think of interpretation. Meantime, you must work, drudge."

And much more of the same sort, to which, I regret

to say, Miss Winston did not listen as reverently as she should have done; for more than one dogmatic utterance was in conflict with the artistic creed of Karl Geist, to whom, first of all, she bowed. Geist did not countenance suppressing individuality, nor believe that interpretation should wait on the acquisition of a technic able to cope with compositions designed to dazzle and astound. "The piano-playing machines have said all there is to say on that sort of technic," he declared; "and the pianist of the future will be primarily concerned with more important matters."

Madame Friedenthal, her little sermon done, chatted amiably of her own student days. As a child she detested piano practice, and "watered the streets with her tears." Mathematics was always her favorite study; and though a woman, she prided herself on her logic.

Presently they spoke of what Miss Winston should study. In Madame's opinion, she should study the things she cared least for; these were what she needed. (Yes; there was no doubt that Madame Friedenthal was a logician, despite the feminine gender. One should study the things to which one is not temperamentally drawn, just as one should marry one's opposite. We all know how successfully this rule works out in matrimony.)

"Take something simple," said Madame; "a Chopin nocturne, or 'Songs Without Words'."

Hope, if not a logician, was a bit of a diplomatist.

"I am inclined to be sentimental," she demurred; "don't you think such things would be bad for me?"

"Sentimental? Yet you dislike Chopin!" was the quick rejoinder. "How is that?"

"But Chopin is so *fearfully* sentimental."

"What can you expect?"—good-humoredly. "The poor man wasn't well, and he always had a woman on his mind."

Several other composers were suggested. Brahms? Well, a little, a very little; one can not build up technic on Brahms.

Above all, one should not dream of scaling the final peak unless one were in perfect physical condition. Was Miss Winston strong in body? The young lady replied that she had never been sick a day. Madame was able to return as clean a bill of health. "I am the same always, night or morning," she said.

She shook hands cordially at parting. The touch of her fingers—five slender hammers of bone and muscle—was an inspiration in itself.

So, it would appear, the die was cast, and Mr.

Arthur West must stand the hazard of it. Infatuated youth!—do you realize what it will mean to be wedded to a beautiful, tender-hearted young woman who accepted your hand merely in gratitude?

Poor boy, of course you do not. The world will say: "What a happy couple those young Wests are! They dote on each other. Mrs. West always plays her best when Mr. West is in the audience, and looks first for him in the crowd that comes to congratulate her." Ah, but the world will not understand. It will not see beneath the veneer. It is easily deceived by the semblance of happiness. It does not realize what a difficult thing is the "artistic temperament." Wretched, wretched Arthur! Will nothing interpose to save you?

Nothing promises. A young woman is speeding across the city to reply "Yes" to your tender proposal—not wholly easy in her mind, yet resolved as to her course, even smiling at thought of the Prince and the Chariot, and wondering whether little Alice will approve.

Precisely how she shall word her acceptance of the tender of marriage perplexes her. Of course, an early marriage is out of the question; Arthur must understand that clearly, as no doubt he will. There must be

no announcement of the engagement, nor any change in their present relations, even between themselves; Arthur must understand that also; it may be a trifle harder to grasp, but he is a bright boy. Chiefly (and this is the difficult thing to write: how difficult the reader will understand if she has ever been in a similar predicament), Arthur must be made aware that Miss Winston does not love him, at present—that is, not as he deserves to be loved; that her sentiments may not change, although there is really no reason why they should not; that music comes first in her thoughts, from which he is not utterly excluded; and that since he is fully advised of the precariousness of his suit, he may, if he sees fit (and as perhaps he should), recall his proposal (which does him more honor than herself), without disturbing their friendship a hair's breadth.

This seemed to cover the case; yet as she ran it over in her mind it impressed her as a trifle cold. She did not appear to be sufficiently grateful. Perhaps it would be well to lay a little more stress on the possibility of a change in her sentiments. Arthur was a sensible youth, who would not presume—

The conductor received a hurried signal. A young lady had ridden three squares past her corner.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN WHICH KARL GEIST MAKES A CASUAL CALL

As she ascended to her lodgings, on the second floor of the shabby brownstone, giving on the street, Hope asked herself how long she should continue to occupy them. They were adequate, and fitted up in a style to which hitherto she had been unaccustomed; quite in contrast, too, with other rooms in the house, glanced at passingly; the parlor below and the dining-room in the basement were commonplace to the point of dreariness. The comfort and touch of luxury which she enjoyed were, of course, attributable to her kind friend, Doctor Erdmann, who had personally selected the apartments (a large living-room and a small bedroom), and had seen that they contained

everything Miss Winston might desire. From Doctor Erdmann had come the "Colossus" grand piano, the music cabinet, and the piano lamp. She had protested against this munificence, the propriety of accepting which she gravely doubted; but the good Doctor had gently overruled her objections—"in the cause of Art"; and as the things were in the rooms when she arrived to take possession, to insist on their removal was to risk offending the most disinterestedly benevolent gentleman one would encounter in a long day's walk.

None the less, her mind was far from tranquil, and she was all the more pleased that her visit to Madame Friedenthal had resulted so successfully; for since she had decided to bond herself, soul and body, to Music, she would no longer be under obligations to any person.

The thought of her bondage made her shiver a little, as she sat to her writing-table and began to compose her reply to Arthur's letter.

"Dear Arthur—"

The words seemed hollow, the merest shells of speech. Never had Arthur been more distant from her thoughts; for suddenly the magic lantern threw on the screen the picture of a park in springtime, a

dark-haired young man stretched on the greensward, by the side of a silver lagoon. She heard again, fainter than Elfland's horns, the music in his voice—

"Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him."

Then the park rolled away, like the panorama of "Parsifal," and the other picture took its place: two in a valley, hand in hand by the river's brim, a white-throat singing in a hazel covert.

An abrupt and fierce desire for her own happiness rushed over her. She shrank from the immolation of—herself. Yes: for the first time it came to her that she, not Arthur, was to be sacrificed; that her soul, not his, would be numbered with the wrecks on Music's sounding shore. What should it profit her, as was asked many centuries ago, if she gained the whole world and lost her own soul? Poor Princess Hope! She hid her face in her arm and cried softly.

Suddenly she lifted her head, irresolution banished. Taking up her pen, she wrote—slowly, but without hesitation—sealed the letter, and put on her hat. There was a mail-box at the near corner.

The door-bell jangled dismally below. She started apprehensively, pricking her cheek with a hat-pin. She was overwrought, she told herself. A walk would quiet her nerves.

As she opened the door she started again; the landlady stood without. Hope disliked the woman exceedingly. She was always respectful and accommodating, but she had a furtive air and an evasive eye, and an unpleasant habit of smiling when there seemed not the slightest reason for it.

"Letter for you, Miss. A boy just brought it."

Hope thanked her in a monosyllable, and closed the door.

The letter was addressed in an unfamiliar hand, but as she drew forth the inclosure the signature "Rhoda Weathers" faced her, and with a premonition of disaster she turned hurriedly to the introductory "Dear, dear friend. . ."

She read, with paling cheeks, to the last word; then a cry of anguish passed her lips, and she drooped against the window-casing, hand pressed to heart.

A tap at the door went unnoticed. It was repeated, and this time she heard. She rose, saying, "Come!" and went toward the door. It opened, disclosing Doctor Rudolf Erdmann.

At sight of him Hope halted, fear and detestation dilating her eyes, Rhoda's letter crumpled in her hand. "You!" her lips tried to say, but the word died on them.

This ominous greeting was not remarked by Doctor Erdmann; the daylight waned, and he was, besides, occupied in bowing low over his silk hat.

"Good afternoon," he said suavely, and advanced into the room.

She shrank back, still unable to syllable her emotions, and put a hand for support on the back of a chair. And now Doctor Erdmann could not fail to perceive that something was amiss.

"My dear Miss Winston . . . you are ill . . . permit me . . ."

Step by step she retreated, staring fascinated and with a growing horror—not at the man, but at a cabochon emerald ring on one fat finger of his outstretched hand.

Since the hand was not taken, he withdrew it. The spell was broken.

"How dare you!" she cried. "Oh, how *could* you!"

"Miss Winston . . ." He paused, at loss for the right phrase.

"Go away! Please go away!" she begged.

At that moment came another knock at the door, and Hope sprang toward it.

"Stop—I will go," said Doctor Erdmann, losing his temper. He thrust her aside roughly, jerked open the door, and passed out, shielding his face with his high hat.

The opportune caller was Karl Geist. So dark was the hall, Erdmann probably did not recognize him. Waiting until the president of the Colossus had turned the stair, Geist tapped again softly at the now open door.

Hope stood in the center of the room—rigid, wide-eyed, and breathing with difficulty. Rhoda's letter was still crushed in her hand.

"May I come in?" said Geist pleasantly. "I saw you at the window reading, and I ventured a call. The landlady told me you were not at home. I must apologize for insisting."

"Thank you," said Hope, voicing the deep relief which the sight of his gentle face had brought her. "Won't—won't you sit down?"

She strove to match his casual manner, grateful to him for blinking the late presence of Doctor Erdmann.

"I can stay but a minute or two," said Geist, tak-

ing a chair. "I have to-night's concert on my mind, you know, and I promised Miss Hammond to run over her number with her."

At the word "concert" Hope gasped, and crushed Rhoda's letter more tightly. Then, controlling herself, she said:

"When you go, I should like to go with you—if I may."

"Yes; certainly," he nodded, as if Miss Winston's abrupt decision to leave her present lodgings was the most natural thing imaginable. "Shan't I call a cab?"

"There is a telephone in the house. Would you mind . . .?"

"Not in the least. . . . Any little business matters to attend to?"

She mentioned a sum owing the establishment, and gave him her purse, and Geist descended to interview the landlady.

When he was gone, Hope's fortitude gave way, and she abandoned herself to a fit of weeping. How, oh, how could she bring herself to tell Geist that Rhoda was dead! Over and over she sobbed the words—"Rhoda dead!—Rhoda dead!"—until the clock in the room, the turning wheels in the street, the

cries of children at play, took up the sad refrain. Suddenly she sprang up, dashing the tears from her eyes. She must be brave for Rhoda's sake. Rhoda had laid an obligation on her, and she would need all her strength and courage to discharge it.

When Geist, having transacted the business below stairs in a leisurely fashion, returned to the second-floor front, Miss Winston was completing a hurried packing of her trunk—never a long operation, as her worldly effects were few. The trunk strapped, they sat down to await the coming of the cab.

Geist essayed a few commonplaces of conversation. The girl, he saw, was overstrung, and was making drafts on her nerve reserve.

"Where would you like to go?" he said.

"To Flora's," she replied. "Flora will take me in for a day or two. I shall be going home soon."

"Let me assert my waning authority," he smiled, "and command you to avoid the concert to-night."

The remark seemed further to disorder her.

"I *must* go," she answered chokingly. "You—you will understand."

He was perplexed, and a trifle dismayed by the look of pity which she turned on him.

"It will be more or less of a strain," he cautioned.

"You have been working too hard, I fear. You need quiet."

"Yes; it will be a strain—but—but I *must* go."

"Very well, then," he said gravely.

A clatter on the asphalt before the house betokened the arrival of the cab.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A CHANGE IN THE PROGRAMME

When Stanley Arthur Jones and his radiant bride-to-be entered the conservatory recital hall, the president of the Colossus was holding the last levee of the music year.

Commencement week had been unusually strenuous and brilliant. Its cares and ferments justified, perhaps, the lack of color in Doctor Erdmann's normally florid face, a certain distraction in his manner, a nervous apprehension more than once betrayed when some person with whom he was not at the moment talking touched him on the arm.

"How serious Doctor Erdmann looks!" Flora re-

marked. "One hardly recognizes him without his Cheshire-cat grin."

"Consider," said Jones, "the responsibility of turning loose on the world ten thousand graduates."

"Fifteen hundred at the most. Don't make it any worse than it is."

"If Erdmann has a conscience . . ."

"Nonsense!" said Flora. "Oh, there are the Mayburys. Their first appearance, to my knowledge. I suppose they came on Karl Geist's account."

"Ah, he plays to-night?"

"Yes; and so does Rhoda Weathers. This concert will be, in a way, her début."

Mr. Jones acknowledged the privilege of being in at the birth of an artistic career, and desired the pleasure of congratulating the artist in advance of her triumph. "But I do not observe Miss Weathers," he remarked, glancing about the hall.

"Nor I." Miss Matheson wrinkled her brows a bit. "I haven't seen the child since morning."

"Your voice and face betray uneasiness, my love," said Jones. He smiled fondly on her.

"Nothing escapes you novelists," said Flora ironically. "Yes; I *am* uneasy, Stanley. Come, let's say how-do-you-do to Doctor Erdmann."

They advanced to discharge this obligation.

So far as the general public was concerned, commencement week was at an end. The annual oration had been delivered by a prosperous alumnus, the diplomas and gold medals distributed, the degrees conferred, and the commencement concert given. This concert, always the principal feature, had been brilliant beyond precedent. Graduates, establishing a new record in number, had been ranged impressively, tier on tier, like a vast oratorio chorus, on the stage of Music Hall, at their feet the conservatory orchestra-graduates in brass and strings and woodwind; beyond, an audience that filled the great hall to overflowing. Facing this enormous assembly, and indicating proudly the tiering talent at his back, Doctor Erdmann had been inspired to say:

"This is the Golden Age of Music!"

The audience clapped a loud assent. The graduates, thinking of their teachers' certificates, smiled happily.

The present reception and concert, in the recital hall of the conservatory, was an impromptu affair, quite apart from the conventional pyrotechnics of commencement. It contemplated the mutual pleasure of the more serious students and members of the

faculty, and the limited number of invited outsiders included distinguished members of the musical set of the metropolis, who, like the Mayburys, seldom or never attended a Grindstone concert. Doctor Erdmann suggested it, and desired Karl Geist to take charge of the musical end, himself attending to the social. The result was a programme of exceptional interest, comprehending several compositions of a more intimate sort than one may hope to hear at public concerts; or would care to hear, for that matter, since in a large auditorium there can be no real sympathy between player and listener, and only the superficial in the effective.

When all who wished to clasp the hand of Doctor Erdmann had enjoyed the privilege, the president and a dozen of his faculty took seats on the stage, and the audience disposed itself for the concert.

Arthur West, arriving late, paused before taking his seat to scan the rows of faces. He located his parents, sitting with Flora Matheson and Stanley Arthur Jones, and a score or more of people that he knew; but the bright particular countenance his eyes made quest for was not in sight. His disappointment was peculiarly acute. The non-appearance of Miss Winston was ominous. Had she remained away from

the concert to avoid encountering him? It was drearily possible.

Trying are the hours that follow the despatch of a proposal of marriage. The mails, swift enough in sordid business transactions, are very snails with billets-doux; and one may not force the pace, in such delicate correspondence, with stamps of special delivery; though fancy may picture Cupid a-wheel, letter-bag at side, dashing up to the porch of the waiting lover. "Sign here, sir!"

While Arthur dared not hope for a favorable answer to his letter before at least the morning following, he had lingered at home for the latest mail, relieved in mind when the postman passed him by. A speedy reply, he reflected, would spell rejection; for when the word is Yes, woman is properly deliberate in saying it. Surely in such case, no news is good news; and Arthur hastened to the concert, hoping to read, in the eyes of the beloved one, some letter of the little word the morrow might have in store for him.

"I say, West!"

A hand touched his arm, and he turned to see a police-court reporter for the *Chronicle*.

"Hello, Bentley! Doing music now?" asked Arthur jokingly.

The other grinned a disclaimer. "No. I'm looking for Doctor Erdmann. Point him out for me, will you. I don't happen to know him."

"That large, commercial-looking gentleman on the stage," indicated West. "You will know him by his spreading smile."

"I'll take a reef in *that*," replied the reporter. "Thanks, old man."

"What's up?" asked Arthur curiously.

"Suicide—music student," the newspaper man returned briefly, and made toward the stage door.

West followed him down the side aisle, and took a seat between his mother and Miss Matheson.

"Have you seen Hope?" he questioned Flora, in an undertone. "I thought she might be with you."

He was informed that Miss Winston had gone behind with Karl Geist a few minutes before.

"Why, is she to play?" he asked, suddenly interested in the programme.

"Her name is not down," Miss Matheson replied. "I haven't seen Hope to speak to for several days. Stanley"—a tender smile—"occupies so much of my time."

"Time was made for lovers," murmured the enraptured Jones.

"For prosperous lovers," said Arthur dismally. Flora gave him a glance of sympathy.

A young man came out on the stage and spoke a word in Doctor Erdmann's ear. The president got up hurriedly and followed him off. Arthur West was suddenly reminded of the reporter's communication.

"How distressing!" exclaimed Mrs. West. "Did you learn the name, Arthur?"

The *Chronicle* man had not mentioned the name.

"A Colossus student?" the elder West inquired.

A natural inference. The reporter was interviewing the president.

"I'll hold Bentley up when he comes out and find out the details," young West offered.

"Don't, Arthur!" Miss Matheson implored, in an agitated whisper. "It might—it might be some one we know."

He looked at her in surprise. The color had forsaken her face; intense anxiety was in her eyes. The young man wondered.

"Why anticipate evil tidings?" remarked Jones, with a lover's deprecation of the jarring note. "As it is, our pleasure in the concert has been clouded already."

Arthur's apology was submerged in a round of ap-

plause that greeted Victor Mabbitt, who opened the programme with Schumann's "Carnival."

In the midst of this joyous offering Doctor Erdmann returned to his seat. His face was chalky, and he mopped his forehead, though the temperature in the hall was not high. The reporter did not reappear. He had slipped out the rear door.

Mabbitt's performance was rewarded with the approbation of the critical. He had laid aside the carelessness which usually characterized his playing, and gave sincerely of his best.

It was wasted on at least two persons in the audience. Arthur West was inattentive to the point of restlessness. Flora Matheson, sick at heart with apprehension, for which she had her own reasons, was unable to withdraw her eyes from Doctor Erdmann's face.

Mr. Mabbitt retired.

" 'Rhapsody, G-minor, Brahms,' " Jones read from the programme; "by the master's favorite pupil, Rhoda Weathers. My love, we should have brought some roses."

Miss Matheson did not seem to hear. She leaned forward, breathless, her eyes now fixed on the little door that opened off the stage. When, presently, it

opened, and a young woman dressed plainly in black appeared, Flora sank back, a sob in her throat, and put her programme before her face.

"Why, it's Hope Winston!" said Mrs. West.

"A pleasant surprise, truly!" said Jones.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Arthur. Then observing Miss Matheson: "Flora was in on it. She's smiling behind her programme."

Miss Matheson's fingers closed convulsively around the young man's wrist, and he fell silent.

Disregardful of the polite spatter of applause which greeted her entrance, the young woman in black crossed to the piano. Those nearest the stage observed that her face was very pale, and that she glanced neither to the right nor the left. Once seated, she began, without an instant's pause, the Second Rhapsody of Brahms.

The cognoscenti sat up and looked at one another, and as measure succeeded measure they wagged their heads in disapproval. It might be magnificent; it was not Brahms. Amazing interpretation!

Under the flying fingers of the young pianist, the Rhapsody became a canticle of woe, a declaration of despair. Rage was in the opening theme; grief, desperation, blind resentment against an ineluctable fate,

were in the climax; all else was dull pain, irremediable sorrow.

Doctor Erdmann listened with a face of stone.

The Rhapsody closed sensationally. Instead of the diminuendo came a tempestuous crescendo—wave heaped on wave, and flung, in final impotent frenzy, against the wall of the closing cadence.

Stirred by the *tour de force*, the audience applauded extravagantly. Even the cognoscenti joined. It might not be Brahms, but it was indubitably magnificent.

The pianist rose, as from a grave-side, and with unsteady steps recrossed the stage. As she passed the little door she put out her hands gropingly, and sank, sobbing but dry-eyed, into the arms of Flora Matheson, who, anticipating a collapse, had hastened behind scenes, followed by Arthur West.

"Poor dear!" said Flora, whose own eyes were streaming. "Get some water, Karl. Mr. Mabbitt, will you call a cab?"

"Permit me," said West, and hastened on the errand.

Mabbitt had anticipated Geist, who appeared completely dazed. "Keep the concert going, Karl," he said. "I will assist Miss Matheson."

"Thank you," said Flora. "Miss Winston will be all right presently."

"Natural reaction after such an effort," Mabbitt remarked. "Gad! what strength!"

"Your number, Miss Hammond," said Geist dully.

The young woman addressed detached herself from the little circle of sympathizers, and went forth to offer Liszt's "Mephisto" waltz.

The gay, wild, mocking music put the audience in an excellent humor.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CAMP ON THE POPPLE

Some twenty miles north of Ledge, an outpost of civilization, a twenty-foot slash through the timber crosses the south fork of the Popple River. Here a log shelter for horses has been built, for thus far the wilderness wayfarer may travel on wheels, and the junction of road and river is a common camp-ground. Beyond the Popple the "road" dwindles to nothingness.

In a small clearing on the north bank of the stream a family of rabbits are frisking around a small tent pitched among young poplars. One tips over a pile of pans, and the resultant crash sends the brood scurrying for cover. Lifeless the tiny world, while

the reverberations of the thunderclap die among the grasses. Now here, now there, is lifted up a pair of questioning ears. Confidence returns. The youngest of the brood whisks into the clearing. Presto! the others follow, and the noiseless rout is on anew.

But hush! From the river comes the sound of a paddle. Stiffens every frolicking ball of fur. A bark canoe pushes through the overhanging green, and the Lord of the Clearing arrives. Whisk! the fur-balls are gone, as fays at cock-crow.

The Lord of the Clearing drew his bark ashore and placed it bottom up among the bushes, noting a seam that needed pitching. But this must wait until after supper; taking up his ax he felled a dead jack-pine and worked the stick into fuel. Then he kindled a fire, and pail in hand went down to the river.

The day had been oppressively hot, and a portentous calm lay along the valley. The voice of the river seemed muffled; the tin pail, struck against a stone, was sharply responsive; poplar leaves, that danced to a zephyr's fiddling, hung quiverless. Leaning against the log bridge that spanned the stream, he studied the copperish southwest. A storm threatened.

A small sound, dull and distant, disturbed the sluggish stillness, resolving itself, as the minutes passed,

into the rattle of a wagon coming down Pine Mountain. "Timber cruisers," Churchill Gray surmised, and returned to his fire.

When he had finished supper, he spread a map upon his knees, and with pipestem traced, for the hundredth time, the pathway to the Lake of Dreams. If the Popple were navigable, one might drive a canoe to the lake in which it headed, and journey thence, by a chain of waters, to the very core of Silence.

He had spent the day exploring the South Fork, finding promise of sufficient water for his expedition. The morrow's sun should see him on his way, and, if all went well, he should stand, the fourth day, on the shore of the Lake of Dreams—a lake his fancy had surrounded with a rim of exquisite beauty, and out of which a fascinating little river ran northward, to join with other little rivers in a pilgrimage to Hudson Bay. He meant to camp on the southern marge of this magic mere, explore and chart its every indentation, and fish the little river, which, an Indian had told him, was a wonderful stream for trout. As in deep content he smoked his pipe, he traversed in imagination the reaches of the Popple and the chain of waters beyond; and men and cities, and brotherhood and strife were not. The world was well forgotten.

But, as many of us have found, forgetting may not long be willed, nor may we escape the world so long as a single thread binds us to it. In the course of an hour an outfit from Ledge arrived in the clearing. The teamster took a bulky letter from his cap, and delivered it to Gray.

"Ericsson said I might ketch you here before you pulled your stakes," he remarked. "If you want to send back any mail I'll take it in the morning."

Gray glanced at the letter, and noted that the handwriting was Flora Matheson's.

"Much obliged, Kelly," he said. "Who are the chaps with you?"

"Dave Sterling and Ed Howe. Looking pine in sixty-four. We shack up here for the night."

"You'll be starting back early, I suppose?"

"By sun-up. Road's pretty tough. Guess we're goin' to have a shower."

The teamster, squinting at the sky, went back to his horses, and Gray opened his letter.

"My Dear Churchill," it ran: "Karl gave me your address, such as it is, and suggested that I write to you. He thought you might wish to learn of a few recent happenings, even if you lighted your pipe with the news, as you threatened to do. Poor Karl! He is

terribly upset by Rhoda Weathers' suicide, the newspaper reports of which I inclose. *Overstudy*, they say the cause was, but some of us believe otherwise. It is not a pleasant story, Churchill, and I will not pain you with it now. You never saw much of Rhoda, so your interest in her can be only slight; but as her little tragedy brought forward, somewhat dramatically, *a person in whom you may be interested*, you will forgive my disturbing your woodland peace with uncheerful tidings. Perhaps I shan't disturb it, as it is; for I dare say you will not get this letter until you come out of the tall timber. However, I am hoping for the best, and if I do not hear from you promptly, I shall take the responsibility of doing what I am now going to ask you to do.

"But first about Rhoda. She was to appear at a concert given in the conservatory last night, and just before the mad child drowned herself she sent a note to Hope Winston, asking her to play the Brahms Rhapsody in her stead; a curious request, when you consider that the girls were not really friends; although Hope tells me that from the first day she met Rhoda she had a curious feeling that their destinies were linked. No one except Karl and myself knows the real reason for the change in last night's programme, so we have been spared the usual newspaper 'romance,' with pictures.

"I wish you might have heard Hope play that Rhapsody. It was wonderful, it was unearthly. The

hands were Hope Winston's, but the soul, Churchill, was the soul of Rhoda Weathers. Of course, Hope, like the true feminine she is, went all to pieces afterward, and is still a bit hysterical. I don't understand her—quite. It was a terrible strain, to be sure, but there seems to be something back of it all—something Hope hasn't told me. She talks of going home at once, and I am having a difficult time of it trying to dissuade her. (I wish you were here to help me.) Arthur West called an hour ago, but Hope begged to be excused from seeing him. Poor Arthur! He, too, is badly broken up. Some of us thought we saw a match there, but the dear girl has suddenly acquired an intense aversion for the male sex, and declares that the only man she wishes to see again is her father. (You can take that, Churchill, with a grain of salt.) You will readily understand how cheerful such sentiments sound to a young woman who is to be married in October. Forgive the reference to my own happiness. It seems dreadfully selfish, in view of yesterday's tragedy.

"Now about Hope and her future. It seems she has no more money for music lessons, and is too proud to accept assistance from her friends. I have talked and talked to her, and even wept, but it doesn't do a bit of good. She is set on burying herself in Swiftwater, and the mere thought of that makes me wild. Don't you think that if the offer came from Mrs. Maybury, who would know just how to formulate it, the matter

might be arranged? Won't you write to Mrs. Maybury *at once*—that is, if this letter reaches you before you vanish in the deep-tangled wildwood. Meanwhile I will do my best to persuade Hope to remain with me a while longer.

"You are well, of course, and beautifully browned, and having a perfectly glorious time. But come back before October, won't you, Churchill, and be present at a 'quiet home wedding'? Affectionately,

"FLORA."

Gray turned to the newspaper clippings, which concerned, as the *Chronicle* phrased it, "the self-destruction of a pretty music student whose reason had been unsettled by excess of study." There was a brief interview with Doctor Erdmann, in which the president of the Colossus, "profoundly affected by the tragic event," spoke in warmest terms of the unfortunate young woman, whose talent was of an unusually high order, and who, had she lived, would have brought credit to the Colossus and herself. "A pathetic interest," the *Chronicle* went on to say, "was lent to the concert last evening in the recital hall of the conservatory by the fact that Miss Weathers's name was on the programme for a Brahms Rhapsody. Her place was filled by another student, Miss Hope Winston,

who gave a splendid and convincing rendition of the rhapsody, evoking a furore of applause, to which the young lady was too modest to respond."

Gray put by the clippings, and looked the letter through again. Yes; there was "something back of it all," as Flora surmised. He recalled his farewell chat with Karl Geist,—his friend's uneasiness and plainly-evidenced wish that Gray delay his departure for the north country. He had not pressed Geist for details, not wishing to seem over-interested in Miss Winston; thus he had lost, or declined, a possible opportunity to serve her.

Again he was appealed to; and this time the request was one with which he was quite willing to comply. There was no question, he thought, of Leith Maybury's readiness to offer her protégée a more substantial encouragement than she had given hitherto, and, as Flora suggested, she was the person who best could arrange the matter.

Gray's first plan, formed on reading Flora's letter, was to go back with Kelly to Ledge, and proceed by steamer to Zenith, at the head of the great lake, from which point he could communicate with Mrs. Maybury by wire; this done, he might return to Ledge, and the magic reaches of the Popple, and the wild waters be-

yond; to paddle and pack, and the joys of the unknown trail.

But on the second reading of Miss Matheson's communication, he wondered whether it would not be better to go on to the city, and reason personally with a headstrong young woman who talked foolishly of immuring herself in Swiftwater, wasting her God-given genius on the desert air of a remote hamlet. She must be made to see how selfish and absurd was such a decision: she owed a sacred duty to her art, and no false pride, no trivial scruples, should be allowed to stand in the way of a perfect discharge of this duty. (Precisely what did Flora mean by "*a person in whom you may be interested*"? A woman's italics are always puzzling. They may possess a deep import, or they may be mere emotional penstrokes, signifying nothing.)

There would be no difficulty about money. Miss Winston would acquiesce if the matter were put to her properly, as it would be. Her friends believed in her: she must be brought to believe in herself. (And what did Flora mean by "You can take that, Churchill, with a grain of salt"? Probably nothing. Analyzed, the remark failed of special significance. Who would not take with a grain of salt a declaration by a vital

young woman, still in her teens, of aversion for the male sex?)

Was he in love? He did not stop to debate the question, but sprang up and went over to his neighbor's camp-fire.

"Is there a boat up to-night, Kelly?" he inquired.

The teamster reflected. "Let's see, the *Bradshaw* is due, ain't she?"

"Don't you know?" Gray's tone was mildly impatient.

"Thursday night—that's right," spoke up one of the cruisers, who was paring potatoes for the evening meal. "She'll be along 'bout midnight."

The other woodsman volunteered the information that there would not be another boat up till Monday.

Gray pulled his tent-stakes with the haste of a man who fears the cooling of a sudden resolution. Was he in love? The question did not press, but time did. He had a scant six hours to cover the twenty miles to Ledge. Ericsson's heavy team required twelve, so rocky was the road.

He put a change of clothing and some small articles into his pack-sack, and strapped a poncho outside. The tent, blanket and supplies were stowed under the canoe, against the threatening shower. One of the

cruisers lent a hand to the camp-breaking, and Gray, abruptly reminded of the Lake of Dreams, turned to him with the inquiry:

"By the way, did you ever happen on a pond about two miles east of Loon Lake?"

"Guess you mean Mud Lake, don't you?" the other ventured.

"It's not named on my map. Some two miles long by a mile wide. Stream runs north out of it."

"Yes; that's Mud Lake," said the woodsman emphatically. "Tamarack clear round it, and the water 'd make a dog sick. I've struck some lonesome holes, friend, but Mud Lake's the damnedest ditch I ever got into."

Gray smiled. "I was thinking of camping there, but I've changed my mind. Much obliged for your assistance." He swung his pack to his shoulders and lighted his pipe.

The teamster approached with a lantern. "Better take this along," he said. "If the shower ketches you on Pine Mountain you'll have a job keepin' the trail. Goin' to leave your outfit here?"

"No. I want you to haul it in to-morrow and stow it in Ericsson's barn. I may be back in a fortnight. Good-by, boys!"

Gray waved his hand and set off at a four-mile pace; and Kelly, looking after, remarked to his companions:

"Guess that letter was from his best girl, he's in such a thunderin' hurry to answer it."

CHAPTER XXX

THE LANTERN BEARER

Beyond the river the trail south flung uphill through a belt of pine, debouching on a burnt plain brushed with second-growth firs and poplars. Here the air, lifeless for hours, was beginning to stir again. The poplar leaves, tireless friskers, first responded, and presently set a mad pace for the lower herbage. The blue of the sky was slowly blotted out. A raindrop plashed against the cheek of the young man striding over the plain.

Past the burning the path pitched down through another zone of dense forest, to the foot of Pine Mountain. There was scarcely enough light in this green gorge to mark the rocks that strewed it, and Gray

lighted the lantern. Instantly nature took up the feeble challenge: a white flash rent the gloom, the thunder called to the hills, and the clouds opened.

The Lantern Bearer unstrapped his poncho and put it about his shoulders. By the time he reached the lane's end and emerged into the open the rain was falling steadily in thick slanting rods. A brook which crossed the road, remembered as a stream of uncommon limpidness, was already roiled and foam-flecked. Darkness had closed in, and the lantern proved indispensable. Its light was small, but it was steady.

Up the grassy slope of Pine Mountain, long since swept bare of heavy timber by forest fires, only wheel-tracks marked the way. The ridge seemed again ablaze. Sheets of flame defined weirdly the crest of the acclivity, and the brief intervals between the thunder-claps were filled with the crashing of dead pines, brought to earth at last. Only the stoutest of the sapless boles could stand against this gale. Gray, fighting his way up the last pitch, was beaten to his knees again and again, and finally forced to crouch against a giant boulder on the summit. He was drenched, spent in wind and muscle; yet it was good to be abroad on such a night. Exultant, he rose from a position he felt to be abject, but he could not stand

against the wind and water that swept the boulder's top.

Each electrical discharge disclosed, for a vivid instant, the circling solitude — beaten shrubs and grasses; groves of poplars bending low, as one tree, before the gusts; blackened skeletons of pines, a ghostly company. One magnificent flash showed a lake three miles away, and the lone spectator on the hilltop, half-stunned by the appalling explosions, found himself watching eagerly for another flash to match it. But the best was past; the Jovian artillery swept north; the wind fell, and the deluge dwindled to a patter. Gray resumed his journey.

In the deep forest beyond Pine Mountain the trail was easy to keep, and his mind was free to consider the adventure on which he was embarked.

Was he in love? The matter wore that face, he confessed; yet he withheld the "Yea." It had all come upon him so suddenly. Flora's letter had not only disturbed his woodland peace, but promised to disturb his still more treasured peace of mind. This had meant much to him in the past, and should be preserved at all hazards. After all, he told himself, it would be no great matter if he missed the up boat; he could take a steamer down the lake the following day, and drop

off at the first telegraph station, somewhere in Canada. Unconsciously his pace slackened.

Lighter grew the way through the wood; the moon was up. Though no breeze stirred, the air was cool and sweet, and grateful forest odors issued from the dripping shadows. Somewhere a white-throated sparrow piped a hymn of thanksgiving for the passing of the deluge. An owl flew up on noiseless wing and established a footing farther on, only to be put to flight again by the strange shape that walked the trail.

The Lantern Bearer halted for a breathing spell at the foot of the last ridge to be ascended, in a natural meadow through which a small stream coursed. Save for the brawling of this upstart pluvial torrent, the serenity of the summer night was undisturbed. Infinite peace brooded over the wild.

The hush was prelude to another convulsion of nature, though of quite a different sort. The young man stretched upon the bridge of corduroy, smoking a long-deferred pipe, suddenly sprang up, adjusted his pack-sack on his shoulders, and began rapidly to climb the ridge.

Chill and discomfort vanished from his rain-soaked clothing; weariness fell away from him; his pack, originally light, became imponderable as ether; the

roots that grew across the trail essayed in vain to snare his flying feet. The air was his element: he was in love! At last he knew it!

He was in love! And the most important thing in the world was to get to Ledge in time to catch the steamer. Ledge was ninety-odd miles from the railway, and there would not be another boat up for four days. But he should not miss the *Bradshaw*. The old tub never pretended to arrive anywhere on time, and was commonly hours late. . . .

A distant hoot pricked him, as spur a jaded horse. Damn the *Bradshaw!* Was she punctual for the first time in her spiritless life? . . . No; it was an owl, striking terror to the heart of some wretched mouse or rabbit. He breathed easier—figuratively; actually he was breathing hard. For even a young man who has been suddenly overwhelmed by the discovery that he loves a young woman, and whose first subsequent desire, thought and purpose is to bridge the hours and miles that separate them,—even such a one can not run uphill, over a rough road, for any considerable time. Love is long, maybe—but breath is short, and muscles tire. The gods are dead that once annihilated time and space to make two lovers happy.

On another occasion our Lantern Bearer would have

found the stretch of timber through which he was hasting an enchanted wood. The moon, full-circled, was up the sky, flushing the forest way with pure white light, and every bend in the trail disclosed a picture of uncommon beauty: flanking columns of spruces magnificently plumed and silver birches of prodigious girth—a single subject, but in composition infinitely varied. The moonlight shimmered on the rainpools, and picked out from the wayside green the showy blossoms of the bunchberry. The scent of twinflower, which carpeted the virgin woodland, floated in the air. A night and scene to match a lover's mood.

An accepted lover's—yes; not the mood of one whose love is as yet untold, and whose mind is in a tumult.

How to declare his passion (a task beset with difficulties of his own erecting), how to reconcile it with words and actions past—this did not cry for immediate consideration. The matter of prime importance was to catch the *Bradshaw*. That lost, four days would be lost. Four days! Ninety-six hours! Eternity!

The summit of the ridge at last. He drew a deep breath. He was in time. The little fishing hamlet of Ledge was still five miles away, but he could see the

whole of the moonlit bay, and ten miles of the dark, deserted shore-line to the east. No steamer light was visible.

The last descent was plain sailing, over a fair wagon road, and for the most of the way the great lake was in view. Distant, its bosom seemed unruffled; but as Gray wound down the hill an ominous sound was borne up to him—the booming of the surf. The southwest storm had raised a heavy sea, too heavy, perhaps, to launch a boat in. There was no harborage at Ledge. In ordinary weather the steamers lay to within half a mile of the shore, and skiffs put out to take off passengers and supplies. In heavy weather communication was suspended.

Familiar with these facts, Gray apprehended that the *Bradshaw* would pass Ledge by without a whistle; but if he could get a boat out the captain would stop and pick him up. Time pressed now in earnest. At any moment the steamer's light might flash off the headland to the east, and she would hold her course, more than a mile from shore.

The village was sound asleep. Even the house of Ericsson, whose business it was to meet the steamers, was dark. A glance at the lake disclosed the sufficient reason. A tremendous sea was pounding on the rocky

shore. No communication with the *Bradshaw* was purposed.

The Lantern Bearer battered at Ericsson's door, wondering whether even so loud a summons would be heard above the roar of the surf. Eventually it was. A woman's voice answered him from an upper window. No; Mr. Ericsson was not at home; he had "gone into the woods" for a day or two. Perhaps Gus Jansen would take Mr. Gray out to the steamer. But was not the lake too rough? Mr. Jansen's place? It was the first above the school-house.

Gray thanked the woman, and as he turned away he saw the *Bradshaw's* light. She was perhaps ten miles distant and standing well out. He ran down to the shore and cast loose one of the skiffs huddled in a lagoon at the mouth of a creek.

A shower of spray flew over him. He straightened up, and for a full minute looked the adventure in the face. Could he get through the breakers? And beyond—could he drive the skiff a mile or more through such a sea? Dare he venture it? . . . Pooh! On such a night Leander swam the Hellespont and drowned for love.

He sprang into the shallow lagoon, lashed the lantern to the skiff's stern-thwart, and advanced to the

line of the surf. When the biggest roller broke he pushed his cockle-shell into the smother and scrambled aboard.

The sedate old *Bradshaw* was forging a slow but steady way through the tumbling southwest sea. She rolled a great deal, to the discomfort of her passengers, many of whom, despite the hour, preferred the deck to cabin or state-room. The chatty revenue officer was remarking to a young woman in a golf cape that it is indeed an ill wind that blows nobody good: thanks to the gale the *Bradshaw's* passengers would reach the head of the lake several hours ahead of time, as no attempts would be made to touch at the fishing villages and lumber camps along the shore.

The young woman wondered how the captain could know where he was at a given time, the coast was so monotonously indistinguishable.

"His watch tells him," explained the officer, glancing at his own. "We are passing Ledge now. That lift in the shore-line is the high land back of the village. A very pretty place by day."

"What is that light ahead, bobbing up and down?" the young woman asked. "It's gone now. There it comes again!"

The revenue officer looked. "There *is* a light, sure enough." He turned to a silent man who stood by the wheel-house window: "Who's fool enough to put out to-night, Ole?"

The mate, who had seen the light some minutes before, reached for the whistle cord and blew a long blast.

"He's got his nerve with him, whoever he is," pursued the revenue officer. "It must be Gus Jansen. He's a daring old Norwegian, and will take any chance."

"The Viking spirit still lives!" the young woman exclaimed romantically.

"Starboard!" said the mate, and rang the engine bell.

As the *Bradshaw* bore down on the Viking craft, the position of her master was seen to be precarious. With one desperate oar he was holding her nose up to the sea, and was bailing with his free hand. The skiff was on the verge of swamping.

"That isn't Jansen," said the revenue man. "Come below, Miss, and watch the landing."

A line made fast forward of the steamer was flung to the adventurer. He caught it, and the skiff swung in. Two deck-hands leaned over the aft gangway rail,

and when the *Bradshaw* rolled down they reached for our Lantern Bearer.

Clinging to his pack-sack, he came aboard flying, and landed limply on the deck, where he lay still, eyes closed. The young woman in the golf cape, observing his complete exhaustion, bent over him sympathetically. He was, unexpectedly, a youthful Viking, and very good to look upon.

He opened his eyes, and regarded her wonderingly. And thinking of another face, he smiled.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE LOVE QUEST

Every berth aboard the *Bradshaw* being occupied, Gray, rolled in a blanket, couched on the cabin floor, while his wardrobe dried in the engine-room. The lake flattened out by sunrise, and the steamer held a straight course for Zenith, establishing an infrequent connection with the noon train for the metropolis.

Thanks to the luxurious appointments of this train, Gray was able to make himself and his garments presentable again. His left arm hung limp, transiently disabled from his battle with the lake waves; and, to his eye, coach and passengers and country-side were curiously unstable—he still felt himself pitching on whitecapped waters. Otherwise the adventure had no ill effect.

He bought a magazine and tried to read a short story, but he could not keep his mind upon the page. When one is living a love story, how attenuated seem the creations of the weavers of tales! So he tossed the magazine away and paced the buffet coach, smoking pipe after pipe, and wondering why it took so long to change engines, and to take water, and to get under way after leaving a station. He had his berth made up unusually early, that he might sleep as many hours away as possible—and then lay awake past midnight.

The noon hour was again striking when he reached the city. He hailed a cab, but, reflecting that that was too slow for the long stretch to Atwood Street, he looked around for an automobile. None being available, he compromised on a trolley car.

Then he wished he had chosen the cab. The car track appeared obstructed more than commonly with grocer carts and drays, the drivers of which were exasperatingly deliberate in turning out. Once before a certain stretch of the way had seemed interminable—that night, the autumn past, when he and Hope had ridden out in awkward silence, relieved by the young woman's touching the conductor's arm and saying: "Atwood Street, please." He recalled the little trem-

ble in her voice, the red spot in cheek, the flash in eye. But her resentment proved transient; he had exhibited a proper repentance, and had been forgiven. If the meetings that followed were infrequent, he had himself to blame: always she had seemed to take pleasure in his company. On one occasion—in the park—he fancied he read in her eyes something more than friendship; and he felt himself slipping from the security of self-elimination; but it was only a passing peril. Their relations, it is true, were not materially altered; nor had the argument that Miss Winston should sacrifice everything to her art lost any of its original force. He was prepared still to urge it—if taxed with inconsistency; or, in certain circumstances, to recant. This was a problem the solution of which might best be left to the inspiration of propinquity. The present time was more profitably employed in re-creating the image of the young woman, in anticipating her surprise at his appearance, the pressure of her hand, a hoped-for look in her eyes that should tell him he was more than welcome. He rode the last block to Atwood Street on the car step, debarked without waiting for a slow-down, and walked rapidly to No. 69.

Mrs. Grady answered the bell. At the mention of

Miss Winston's name her face lighted up, only to cloud again. The young lady no longer abided with her; nor could she say or remember whither she had removed. But Madame Jesurin would know, and if the gentleman would step up stairs Madame would be in shortly.

Gray hesitated. Flora would know her friend's address; but, then, Flora might not be at home . . .

"Thank you; I will wait a few minutes," he said, and followed up stairs.

Mrs. Grady's kitchen was also her reception-hall and dining-room; and as she was preparing her luncheon when the door-bell rang, a cup of tea was hospitably suggested to the visitor. While the kettle sang, Mrs. Grady, occultly apprised that she had a sympathetic audience, launched upon an appreciation of her late tenant. Such a beautiful young lady!—so sweet-natured, so entirely lovable. (Affirmative nods from the visitor.) 'Twas a sad day when she departed; an especially sad day for Patrick, the fetcher of coals, who, deprived of his guardian angel, had fallen from grace after months of sobriety.

Encouraged by interrogations markedly casual, Mrs. Grady rendered a faithful account of Miss Winston's life at No. 69. The two little rooms were just

as she left them: perhaps Mr. Gray would like to peep in. He exhibited an interest more than polite.

In this tiny apartment Miss Winston had conducted her housekeeping. And a smart little cook she was, too—a point Mrs. Grady thought worthy of emphasis. In this larger room Miss Winston had lived and worked. Mrs. Grady was thoughtfully silent while the young man surveyed the blessed domicile. Then she was suddenly reminded of a handkerchief which Miss Winston had gone away without. As Mr. Gray was to see the young lady that day, he might take the "thrifle" along with him. The readiness with which he accepted the square of linen bordered on gratitude.

"*Wirklich, wirklich Sie*, Mr. Gray!"

Madame Jesurin appeared in the doorway.

"What a pleasure! How well you are looking!" she continued. "Nature is such a restorer. The woods, I love them! But why do you come back to the hot city so soon?"

He replied that he had returned on a matter of business.

"Mr. Gray is wantin' to know Miss Hope's prisint addhress," Mrs. Grady explained, with a twinkling eye.

"*Ach*, she has left the city!" cried Madame. "She is at her home in Clearwater—or is it Swiftwater?"

Alas, it was only too true; Hope had departed the afternoon before; Madame was so informed by Arthur West, whom she had chanced upon an hour ago. Gray's disappointment was mirrored in his face; Mrs. Grady's was vocal.

"Come, now, and have the cup of tay," she adjured the young man; "'twill cheer ye up."

He laughed, perforce, and the women with him; and the three went into the kitchen.

While the tea was sipped, the exhaustless topic of Miss Winston was pursued. Madame Jesurin recalled the October day when, in a railway carriage, she first met Princess Hope, and instantly was attracted to her—as who was not? Mrs. Grady, for her part, revived memories of Hope's first appearance in her humble flat, and of the appetizing luncheon to which the young woman had invited her and Madame. "Sure, I niver expected to take tay with a Princess," Mrs. Grady declared.

Observing their guest's mystification, Madame Jesurin laughed softly. Perhaps Mr. Gray had never heard about the Prince and the Chariot? He confessed ignorance; whereupon he was informed of

Alice Winston's childish fancy, and was deeply interested therein.

"Ye have the handkerchief?" Mrs. Grady whispered, when he took his leave.

He assured her that it was quite safe in his pocket.

" 'Tis fine weather for a thrip to the country," she observed, with a benedictory smile. "Good luck to ye, Mr. Gray."

He went down the stairs feeling rather foolish, and baselessly happy.

With the return of his little fortune, increased fourfold by the lucky turn in young Matheson's speculation, Gray had shifted his residence to a more desirable section of the city. To these apartments he now repaired in a cab, and made preparations against a flying trip to Swiftwater. Then he telephoned to Mrs. Maybury to say that he was on his way to consult with her in a certain matter.

The certain matter, he discovered, had already been disposed of, so far as Mrs. Maybury could do so. That morning she had answered a farewell letter from Hope, urging the girl to return to the city, after a brief visit home, and had offered to finance her musical career.

"If persuasion is needed, Churchill, I leave it to you," Mrs. Maybury said, smiling.

"My skill in that line is small," he said.

"It will suffice in this case, I think," she returned significantly.

He rode away in some perplexity. Like Mrs. Grady and Madame Jesurin, Mrs. Maybury seemed without reason to take an extremely doubtful matter for granted. But women, he philosophized, will help along, with a smile or a word of encouragement, the most promising or most desperate affair: this side the altar no cause is counted lost.

In his accumulated mail at the *Post* office, Gray found a brief note from Hope. She was going home, she wrote, and did not expect to return to the city. She wished to thank him for his many kindnesses (some of which she had recently learned of through accident): for the opportunity to hear much beautiful music; for the picture of Brahms, which she should always prize; and for his enlightening counsel, the wisdom of which she had come, somewhat tardily, perhaps, to appreciate. He had been one of her good influences. . . .

It was the first note he had ever received from her, and it gave him a curious thrill. After a futile at-

tempt to analyze the sensation, he read and thrilled again.

Alice Winston popping into his head, he instructed the cabman to drive to a book-store, where he purchased the Blue Fairy Book, and the Green, and the Red, and all the other colors. The child should not lack entertainment the coming winter.

As the first available train for Swiftwater did not leave for two hours, he decided to look up Flora Matheson and Karl Geist. The former, he learned, was out of the city; the latter had departed from beneath the roof of the Colossus, and had set up an establishment of his own.

Geist greeted his friend gravely and without surprise. The effects of the ordeal were visible in the musician's face. He seemed much older; his boyishness had flown. His pupils being at present few, there was opportunity for a talk, and Gray learned the "something back of it all" which was not included in the sum of Flora's information, and which explained Princess Hope's "intense aversion for the male sex."

"Her sentiments are natural enough," said Geist; "but I fancy that the right man could modify them—in time."

Gray mentioned, somewhat hastily, that Mrs. May-

bury had written to Miss Winston, adding: "I am going to Swiftwater to persuade her to accept the offer."

Geist nodded. "That matter will take care of itself. You would better sing her another tune."

The other colored. Somehow, unwarranted inferences by one of his own sex were embarrassing.

"Shall you return to the woods after you have persuaded Miss Winston to accept Mrs. Maybury's offer?" Geist asked, with a flicker of a smile.

"I think so—yes," said Gray.

"Is your suggestion, that I join you, still in force?"

"In full force and effect. Will you come?"

Geist laughed, in his old manner. "Ye-es—if you decide to go," he replied.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN WHICH THE PRINCE COMES—

"May it please your royal highness, it is now about fifty years since I heard from my father, who heard my grandfather say, that there was in this castle a princess, the most beautiful ever seen; that she must sleep there a hundred years, and should be waked by a king's son, for whom she was reserved."

The young Prince was all on fire at these words, believing, without weighing the matter, that he could put an end to this rare adventure; and, pushed on by love and honor, resolved that moment to look into it.

They order things so briskly in the tales of old time. There was never prince that weighed the mat-

ter, or doubted the surrender of the lady, once the physical barriers between them had been swept away. Pushed on by love and honor, and mounted on a miracle of horseflesh, the least of heroes sets a pace which the most impetuous lover in our day can not match.

Churchill Gray checked the weary livery horse upon a water-bar, and looked into the valley of the Mad River. It was timbered much the same as his own north country, and surely no stream could be more attractive than the brown little river that raced below him in the sunlight. This was *her* river; she had spoken of it to him more than once; her feet had helped to wear the path on the farther bank. Perhaps if he lingered he should see her tripping by. But lingering was foe to his impatience. The roofs of Swiftwater were in sight. He urged forward the reluctant horse.

Mother Winston was putting up preserves when the strange gentleman tapped at the kitchen door. Hastily wiping her hands on her apron, she bade him enter, slightly disconcerted by the keenly-inquiring look he bent upon her.

"This is Mrs. Winston, I know," he said, putting out his hand. "My name is Gray. Your daughter may have spoken of me."

"Oh, yes; many times—in her letters." The little mother scrutinized him closely in her turn. "You drove over from Vanceburg?"

"Yes; and found it a most delightful drive. May I put my horse in the barn?"

The hired man was summoned to attend to this.

"You will stay with us to-night, of course?" said Mrs. Winston.

"Thank you. I believe there are no more trains until to-morrow."

Gray looked up quickly as a door opened.

"This is Alice," said Mrs. Winston, as a serious-faced child came into the room.

"Won't you shake hands, Alice?" said the visitor.

She did so gravely, looking at him earnestly with big brown eyes.

"Hope is somewhere about," said the mother. "Alice will find her."

"Sister has gone up the river," said the child, addressing Gray. "I will show you the way."

"Mr. Gray may not wish to walk so far," said Mrs. Winston.

"On the contrary, I should enjoy it," he declared. Then, in explanation of his appearance in Swiftwater: "I came up to see your husband, Mrs. Wins-

ton, on a matter affecting your daughter's future—her music," he added, more explicitly.

The little mother sighed. "Hope has not opened the piano, or mentioned music, since coming home. She feels badly, I am afraid, because she can not go on with her studies."

"She was a little hasty, I think, in giving up because her funds were exhausted. The question of money is really a simple matter, in the case of so great a talent as your daughter possesses."

"It does not seem simple to us—and Hope is very proud. . . . I suppose she plays very well now."

"Very well, indeed. There will be no difficulty, I hope, when the matter is considered in the right light." Gray rose. "But we will all talk the matter over fully after we find the young lady. Shall we set out, Alice?"

"If you please, sir," replied the child; and the pair quested forth.

The way led through sweet-smelling meadows bordering the little river, to a spot where the vale abruptly narrowed, and the greenwood shut the stream from view.

As they walked along Gray became conscious that the little lady at his side was studying him intently.

He turned his eyes suddenly upon her, surprising forth the question topmost in her mind:

"Are you the Prince?"

"I hope so, my dear," he answered, with a gravity to match her own. "But I did not bring my purple chariot; it was such a great distance. And they didn't have anything of the sort at Vanceburg, though I inquired everywhere."

"Did you come from way, way off, where sister was?"

"Yes; from way, way off; from a big kingdom, where there are so many people, you never could count them."

"Is it at the end of the track?"

"The end of the track? Oh, yes; the railway stops there. Some day, little one, you too will make a journey to the kingdom."

Alice shook her head. "I must stay at home and help mother."

"But mother will go, too. Sister will want you all to come and hear her play, in a great hall where there are thousands of people. There isn't anything like that in the fairy tales, is there?"

"No," replied Alice, on reflection. "Sister says they didn't have pianos once upon a time. But they had

fiddles a hundred years before once upon a time, didn't they? Do you know the one about the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood?"

"Yes. The Princess slept a hundred years or so, and the court musicians with her; and when they all woke up the violins and the hautboys played tunes that sounded very old-fashioned to the Prince who broke the enchantment, but excellent tunes, for all that. You see, I remember the story very well, for I was reading it only to-day."

Alice looked up in surprise. "Do *you* read fairy books, too?"

"Not as a general thing. The story happened to be in one of a great many books which I was bringing to a little girl who looks very much like you, and who has a bow of black ribbon over each ear. If you look very carefully in the back of my chariot you may find them."

They had left the meadow and were entering the wood.

"I think I will go back now," Alice said abruptly. "Perhaps you will meet sister coming home. There is only one road through the trees."

"I'll manage it somehow," Gray smilingly assured her.

"Did you say they were in the chariot?" asked the child, her eyes dancing.

"A stout package, marked 'Alice.' You can't miss it."

"Thank you, Prince," she said, and hurried off, her ribbon bows bobbing up and down. Gray, feeling very youthful himself, continued with a singing heart along the woodland way.

There was, as Alice said, but one road through the trees. This clung to the little river, crossing it by a fallen tree every little way, until, the valley dwindling to a narrow pass, it vanished in a maze of alders, from behind which came the sound of water falling in a pool. The path, if it went farther, must be on the other side of the stream. He recalled what had seemed to be a crossing only a little distance back.

Peering through the green tangle, he marked the silver arc of a cascade; and apprised by the beating of his heart that his quest was at an end, he decided to attempt a passage through the alders. These were so thickly set that, clinging to the wall of the pass, one might find footing on their branches. He advanced cautiously, for the stream below was of unknown depth. Suddenly he descried above his head a

solitary strawberry, pendent from a crevice in the cliff.

He reached for it, but his grasp fell short. He reached again—and slipped from the bridge of alders, dropping knee-deep in river water. But he had the strawberry.

CHAPTER XXXIII

—AND THE SLEEPING BEAUTY AWAKENS

And now, as the enchantment was at an end, the Princess awakened, and looking on him with eyes more tender than the first view might seem to admit of: "Is it you, my Prince?" she said to him. "You have waited a long while."

Princess Hope sat up and rubbed her eyes. Had she really seen a face among the alders on the thither side of the pool? Or was it only a part of her day-dream, no more real than the voices of flutes and horns and violins, floating up from the river?

How far away now seemed her brief existence in the world beyond her valley!—more remote than it had

seemed a year ago. We may speak of the "near future," but the past is never nearer than "Yesterday's sev'n thousand years."

She thought of her former friends as of the people of another planet that she had been privileged to visit overnight. And distance softened the hardest outlines, the most unlovely traits. Once she had voted Madame Jesurin a bore; now she remembered only her kindness of heart, her real affection, her innocent enthusiasms, her unfailing good nature. She hoped Madame would have many new language students, and would not have to economize so painfully as in the past. Probably she would lose one of her best-paying patrons, Arthur West. Poor dear Arthur! he would get over his disappointment in time, and he would always remember her kindly, she felt certain.

Flora and Mr. Jones would be married in October, and no doubt would live happily ever afterward. She had been greatly surprised when she learned of Flora's choice, but she could see now that the pair were well mated. Ten years hence, if she should by any chance revisit the glimpses of the city moon, she would find Stanley and Flora a sedate and doting couple, surrounded by an interesting family.

We are all, beloved reader,—with whom I must soon

part,—we are all, in a way, dreamers of "plots," given, when the mood is on, to continuing the life stories of men and women we have known. Likely we shall not set eyes on them again, nor hear aught concerning them, so our fancy is unhampered. Some of the stories we know will run smoothly to the end; others, we foresee, will be tempestuous, and we think we could point out the particular rock on which a particular matrimonial bark will split. It is harmless diversion, this sort of story-weaving—provided that we keep the matter to ourselves.

Princess Hope looked closely at the alders again. They were visibly agitated, and not by wind or current. Presently she heard a splash, and a smothered exclamation. A young man floundered through the greenery, and, seeing her, waved a dripping hat.

She sprang up and called to him excitedly: "You must go back—and around!"—pointing to the cascade.

Impossible, wildly impossible suggestion! He splashed through the pool, waist-deep, his eyes on her face, and he laughed gaily when she took his hand and helped him up the bank, commiserating him on his plight.

"The cause of my undoing, and now itself undone,"

he said, exhibiting the strawberry, crushed against his palm. "Will you still accept it?"

Hope put the tiny fruit to her mouth. Berry, lips and cheeks were of one color.

They sat together on the log of a dead cedar, brought down by some spring freshet.

"Confess," he said, "that I was the very last person in the world that you thought to see."

"You were last in my thoughts," she answered tremulously. "But I pictured you in another valley, by wilder waters. Did you find the Lake of Dreams?"

"I have come to seek it here."

Her heart leaped to the message which the speech conveyed.

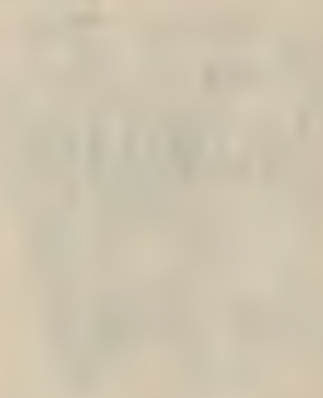
"But—how should you know I was here? I came only two days ago."

"So our mutual friend, Madame Jesurin, informed me."

"You have been to the city?"

For answer he drew forth the handkerchief which Mrs. Grady had intrusted to him—laughing and holding it beyond her reach when, scarlet-faced, she put out a hand for it. Then, to allay her confusion: "You got Mrs. Maybury's letter?"

"This morning."



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